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A R C A N A:
O R
T H E P R I N C I P L E S
O F T H E L A T E *Rt. Britain*
P E T I T I O N E R S t o P A R L I A M E N T
F O R
R E L I E F i n t h e M a t t e r o f S U B S C R I P T I O N.

In VIII. LETTERS to a FRIEND.

by Robert Robinson

LETTER I. ON CANDOR IN
CONTROVERSY.

LET. II. ON UNIFORMITY
IN RELIGION.

LET. III. ON THE RIGHT OF
PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

LET. IV. ON CIVIL MAGI-
STRACY.

LET. V. ON INNOVATION.

LET. VI. ON ORTHODOXY.

LET. VII. ON PERSECUTION.

LET. VIII. ON SOPHISTRY.

*—What shall de honest Man do in my Closet? dere
is no honest Man dat shall come in my Closet.*

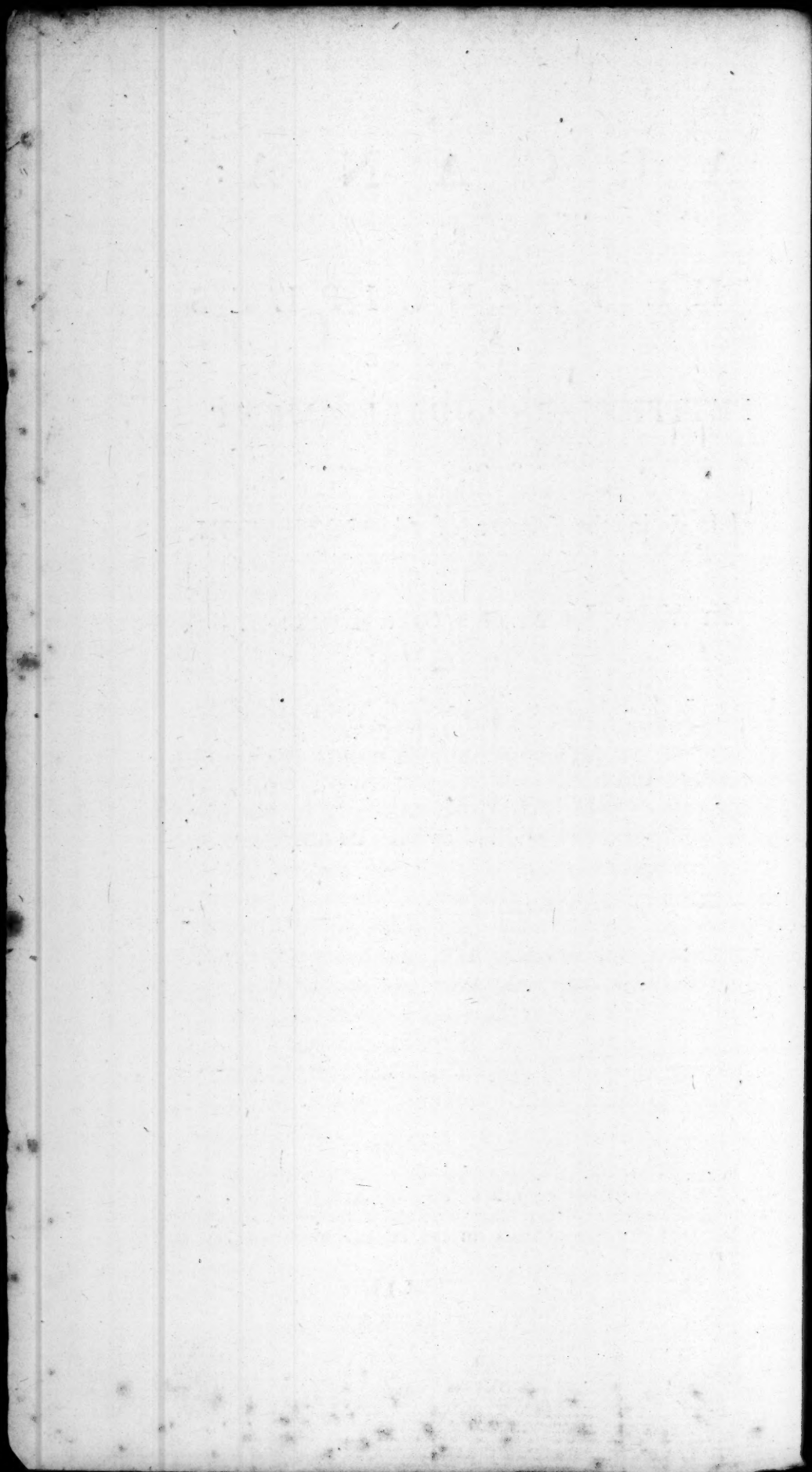
Shakespear.

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T H E P R E F A C E.

THE present state of religion in Britain pretty much resembles its state-policy when the Romans invaded and enslaved it. This island was then divided into several petty-states, and all the strength of those states was employed in securing each against its neighbor: so that when the Romans, the common enemy came, they were too feeble to resist long, and bowed to the imperial yoke. To this divided state of the country, Tacitus, an almost cotemporary historian, ascribes the Roman success. *Nec aliud adversus validissimas gentes pro nobis utilius, quam quod in commune non consulunt. Rarus duabus tribusve civitatibus ad propulsandum commune periculum conventus: ita dum singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur.* (In Vit. Agric. cap. xii.)* Christianity is indeed the religion of the British Empire, but christianity divided into parties; and each party employs its learning, eloquence, fortune, and influence, to prevent the incroachment of another party, to enervate its neighbor, and invigorate itself. While this is doing, ignorance and immorality, stupidity and luxury overflow all bounds, and, to the grief of every good man, overwhelm all orders and degrees of men. A general coalition may seem a romantic notion, and the attempt would be found

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extravagant

* Nothing contributes more to the success of our arms against the most warlike nations, than their want of unanimity. They do not consult together. Very rarely do two or three cities confer together on resisting the common enemy. So that *while each fights, all are conquered.*

extravagant in the hands of inferior people: but would legislators condescend to make the trial, the case would widely differ, and there would be more than a probability of success. Mankind have a few first principles in them, the dictates of nature, and the bases all exterior works: in these, as in their features, they agree much more than some are aware of; and hence a common consent about a thousand things never regulated by law. Christianity is an address to these principles, and not a dispute about words and modes subversive of religion and morality.

Let any impartial inquirer take up the holy scriptures, and ask, whither do all the contents of these ancient writings tend? History, prophecy, miracles, the ceremonies of the old, and the reasonings of the new testament: the legislation of Moses, and the mission of Jesus Christ; to what do they all tend? What is their aim? The proper answer would be, their *professed* end is to give *glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and benevolence among men*. Grand design! Founded on the surest principles, the perfections of God: painted in all the finely-colored imagery of the prophets: sometimes reigning in all the solidity of reason; sometimes rolling in all the majesty of song: here, glimmering in a type; there, blazing in a promise; yonder, set to music by angelic spirits themselves. Now, to be a christian, is neither more nor less than to concur with this design: so much of this, so much true religion, the rest is *vox prætereaque nihil*. || False religions are selfish, this is social; and its sociableness is at once its proof and its praise. See 1 Cor. xiii.

The end, to make men *beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, to make every man sit under his vine, and his fig-tree, and none make them afraid*: this end is so desirable that all wish

to

to obtain it, the only question is, what are the proper means of obtaining this end? One sect of christians propose oaths, subscriptions to creeds, fines, and imprisonments: another proceeds to execrations, corporal punishments, and death, in various frightful shapes, itself. The present petitioners, supposing these means contrary to the nature of things, contrary also to the means prescribed by the founder of religion, and, perceiving that the prophets ascribe these happy days to *the word of the Lord*, which was to go forth from *Jerusalem*: (Micah. iv. 1, 2, 3, 4.) propose the abolition of the present penal means, and the introduction of the original, mild, and placid mode of tuition. The reasonableness of the pretensions of each side is under examination.

Several excellent pieces have been published on this subject; to them these letters do not pretend to add any thing: their only aim is to expose to public view the grounds and PRINCIPLES of those publications. By a strange oversight in readers the real principles of this controversy are mistaken. A statesman suspects civil faction; a trinitarian complains of arianism; a calvinist urges the looseness of arminianism; an arminian the intolerance of calvinism. Surprising! Was the dispute about a DOCTRIN, the divinity of Christ, and predestination might be canvassed, but the dispute is about church-DISCIPLIN. For shame gentlemen, don't mistake the question; the question is not WHAT, but WHY the church believes; whether by compulsion or choice. People thought you had studied a body of divinity, and were well versed in logic, and do you confound the *agenda* with the *credenda*? ‡ Church-government with church-doctrin? Differ as much or as long as you will about doctrin, you are obliged to be of the same

‡ Rules of *practice* with articles of *belief*.

same principles in disciplin and government, unitarian and trinitarian have nothing to do here.

If the principles of the petitioners, contained in these letters, be reduced to one single axiom, it may be expressed in Aristotle's ΤΟ ΚΑΤΑ ΦΥΣΙΝ ΗΔΥ.—*That only can please which accords with nature.* The application of this principle to church-government is attempted in these letters: for why NATURE should be allowed the supreme censor in all other cases, and not in legislation, cannot be easily accounted for. In justice to the subject, the reader will be so kind as to distinguish nature as *created*, from nature as *corrupted*: the latter is the luxuriance, the former the perfection and excellence of whatever exists.

As every sensible object relates to some sense of the body, and is regulated by that sense; so every intellectual object relates to some operation of the mind, and that operation is its sole and sufficient judge. Should a master of sound read or sing to an illiterate countryman the last part of the xivth, and the first of the xvth book of Homer's Iliad, very likely the music of the language would as much exhilarate Hodge as an Italian opera does some of his superiors, who understand as much Italian as he does Greek: But now tell him the poet's meaning: inform him that Homer is speaking about God Almighty and his wife; that, two armies being at war upon earth, God, whom the poet calls Jupiter, favored one, and his wife, named Juno, the other; that the subtle wife, not being able to succeed by force, tried stratagem, and, by the help of a magic girdle, and a little under-god of all work, first inspired her husband with lust, and then laid him fast asleep; that while he slept she did a world of mischief to her husband's favorite army; that on his awaking a violent quarrel ensued, on his part high words and threatening blows, on her's a fund of treachery

treachery and a heap of lies. What says Clumfy to this? He pities its ignorance, or blames its profaneness: he is more moved with horror at the sense, than he had been with pleasure at the sound. He is, as he ought to be, delighted with the one and disgusted with the other. But how so? He neither understands a gamut nor a creed: of mythology he never heard, and to the truth of theology he never swore. True, but NATURE judges. He has ears accessible to the power of harmony; and he has the art of associating or separating ideas in his mind, without knowing any thing about anatomy or ontology. Certain combinations of sound form a harmony which delights his sense of hearing; he calls it music: Certain combinations of intellectual objects, which nature does not, cannot associate, such as *God* and *sleep*, shock that operation of his mind called reason, he instantly perceives its incongruity, is disgusted with it and calls it wickedness.

It might be easily proved that not only arts and sciences, metaphysical and mathematical productions, as they originate in the supreme spirit, so they address themselves to the image of that supreme spirit, man: but even theology in all its branches might thus be pursued from the perfections of the infinite to the operations of a finite being: and that operation to which each addressed itself would be found the best and only judge. Nothing proves the divinity of christianity more than such a comparison; it is the only religion in the world that will bear such a trial. There is not one natural operation of the mind but has its object in this religion: nor one object but affords with its operation. This is not the place to pursue such a subject. Let it suffice to add, jurisprudence is perfect in proportion as it fits the nature of man, and universal toleration in matters of conscience

science is a tendency towards that perfection: *Sub judice lis est.* §

If these letters be intitled *the principles of the petitioners*, it is not because they are published by the knowledge or consent of the petitioners, but because they contain what the writer takes to be the real sentiments of those gentlemen. If their principles be called *secret*, it is not because the gentlemen concerned in petitioning have kept them so, but because people seem not to have taken sufficient care to understand what they have published: and therefore plead for and against they know not what. These letters were first written for the private use of an intimate friend, and are now, with a few alterations, made public only for the sake of diffusing right notions of religious liberty among plain people: (for whose sakes also the outlandish phrases are translated:) For these reasons little or no notice, except in the last letter, is taken about the controversies among the petitioners themselves. It may not be improper however to add a word or two on that subject here.

One set of ministers believe that the magistrate hath an authority to require a religious test, and they also approve of the test which he does require.— These gentlemen subscribe the articles conscientiously, and have no other concern in petitioning than to obtain for their brethren the same liberty which themselves enjoy, that is, a freedom from penal laws.

A second class own the magistrate's authority to require a test, but dislike, because they disbelieve, the present test: and ask to be freed from subscribing any thing but the holy scriptures. Though this be the substance of both the petitions presented by the established and dissenting clergy, yet whoever would understand the merits of the cause must observe that the

the *same* request by different men produces two very *different* questions. With the ministers of the established church the question is, Has a christian church a right to require any religious test of *her own* ministers? But with the dissenting clergy the question is, Has one christian church a right to force her creed on the ministers of *another* christian church? Ought the Greek church to impose her creed on the church of Rome? Ought the church of England to force her's on the church of Scotland? and *vice versa*.

A third class, without inquiring into the nature of the test, wholly deny the magistrate's authority to require any religious test at all. The far greater part of those that have petitioned for a change of the test from human articles to the holy scriptures, are said to be of this number. Some indeed (as it is reported) have taxed them with inconsistency, and even with dishonesty, for asking a right of a power which they disown. But these charges are cruel and ungenerous, and they might just as well undertake to prove that Brutus or Cicero betrayed the cause of civil liberty because they chose different means of procuring it. Cicero makes this just distinction. *My general view, Brutus, says this great man, with regard to public affairs, has always been the same with yours; though my MEASURES in some particular cases have been perhaps a little more vehement.* Epist. V. *I take it, says he in another letter to Brutus, to be the part of him, who acts as one of the leaders in state-affairs, to insure even the PRUDENCE of his measures to the public: and for my part, since I have assumed so much to myself, as to take the steerage of the republic into my hands, I should not think myself less culpable, if I should draw the senate into any thing IMPERTINENTLY, than if I had drawn them into it TREACHEROUSLY.* Epist. VIII. It is a good remark of

Dr. Middleton's, that, though Cicero had blamed, in a letter to Atticus, an action of Brutus, and applauded in the senate that same action, yet there was nothing inconsistent in his conduct. *But, says the Dr. with a proper allowance for different circumstances, this will be found intirely consistent; and both the one and the other perfectly agreeable to Cicero's character: first, to give the best advice to Brutus that he was able; and if that was rejected, then to make the best construction, and the best use of the measures, which Brutus chose to pursue.* Why have not christians as much charity for their brethren as Cicero a heathen had for his?

Various are the lights in which this controversy may be considered, and each has its peculiar advantage, though his measures will be noblest who considers it in *every point* of view. To those that love to trace things to their principles it may be considered *philosophically*, if a philosophical *datum* be hurt it falls. To others a *theological* discussion would be most eligible, if any doctrine of christianity be injured it would destroy itself. Some view it in a *civil* light, and as in a free state every individual has a proportional interest in laws that affect his conscience, as a proprietor of lands has in acts for the inclosure of a field, or the drainage of a fen, it would be happy if men valued their consciences as they value their wastes or their bogs. To others again a *historical* deduction would elucidate best. And, (by the by) 'tis pity but some gentleman of learning and leisure, who also has a free access to registers, records, and manuscripts, would give the public a faithful and candid *history of the British church* from the remotest to the present times. Such a history, composed on some such plan as *Velly's History of France*, would be a most agreeable present to his country. A thousand interesting events would

appear,

appear, a thousand lively anecdotes would occur, a thousand rational reflections would be interspersed: truth would narrate her travels in the grave and the gay, and readers would be driven either to place religion less in words and disputes, modes and forms, and more in its scripture essence *love to God and man*; or to "*flaunder their auncestors by deliuering them over to the deuil of hel.*"

But let the subject be viewed in what light soever it will, the reformation will be allowed a good and laudable work; and the reformation allowed, the principles of the petitioners can't be denied. The most that can be doubted is their prudence, and could any imprudencies of individuals be proved, the goodness of their designs would be a sufficient apology. Yet where is the imprudence of wishing felicity to the crown by contenting the state, piety to the church by gradually meliorating the spirits of her members? Who would hesitate a moment about which he should accept, had he the offer of governing a college or keeping a jail? Intolerance makes churches and states resemble the last.

Others have labored, and we have entered into their labors, is the thankful acknowledgment of thousands in Britain. With a mixture of horror and pleasure, as men on the beach view a tempest at sea, they ken the gloomy papal storm, at first vaporeing in the brain of a proud priest, then louring in the features of a surly synod, anon communicating itself to the state, then bellowing at the bar, thundering in the church, lightning at the stake, dreadfully and unmercifully overwhelming their pious predecessors in every imaginable distress. Yet with the highest satisfaction they behold their grandsires weather the point, outlive the storm, and bring the vessel, though all shattered and torn, into the harbor: Harry the eighth himself declaring, *As we haue abrogated all olde popish tra-*
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ditions

ditions in this our realme, so, if the grace of God forsake us not, we will well foresee, that NO NEWE NAUGHTIE TRADITIONS BE MADE WITH OUR CONSENT, TO BLINDE US OR OUR REALME. This was in 1538, but his majesty had forgotten this when he hoisted the six articles, and in 1540 put to sea again.

While a work so interesting to the properties, the morals, the religion and lives of mankind was in agitation; amidst so many touching scenes of exquisite distress; would that man have been well employed, who, instead of promoting so noble a work, had faddled away his time in exposing the supposed weaknesses of his brethren? He might have written a dissertation on *buffoonery* against Mr. Wishart, for saying, in his zeal against popery, that *a priest at Mass resembled a fox wagging his tail in July.* Or an essay on *impatience*, exemplified in a peevish sick brother, who, having repeated 20 *pater-nosters* before a rood at Madge Pattens for the recovery of his health, and finding himself no better, exclaimed *a foule euil take you and all other images!* Or he might have exercised his talent on the illustrious John Fox for *profaneness*, because, when the priests affirmed that the mass obtained the remission of sins, he replied, *What the Masse! In the deuils name for what intent then died Christe?* He might have affected a hundred commonplace sober see-saws: he might have said, “ Venerable father Fox, you are confessedly a great man, but you are betraying the cause back again to the papists; the reformation hath been hitherto carried on in *God’s name*, and do you call in *the devil*? Beside father, you are inconsistent with yourself, you chafe and redden, contrary to your usual humorous jocularity, particularly that with which you pleaded Bishop Hooper’s cause, when you complained that *he was forced to weare a mathematicall, geometriall, that is a foure squared cap, the foure angles deuiding the* world

worlde into foure partes, albeit that his head was rounde; there is no uniformity in your conduct father, you are a traitor to the cause." Mr. Fox perhaps would have answered, Brother, it is an ill bird that bewrays its own nest: *there is a reason to every purpose under heaven:* you can't comprehend my views unless your capacity was equal to mine: in weakening our hands you strengthen our opponents: this is "*to go over to the aduersarye and to turne the cat in the panne:* But heere, in your conduct he would add, *a man may see what man is of himselfe, when God's good humble spirit lacketh to be his guide.*"

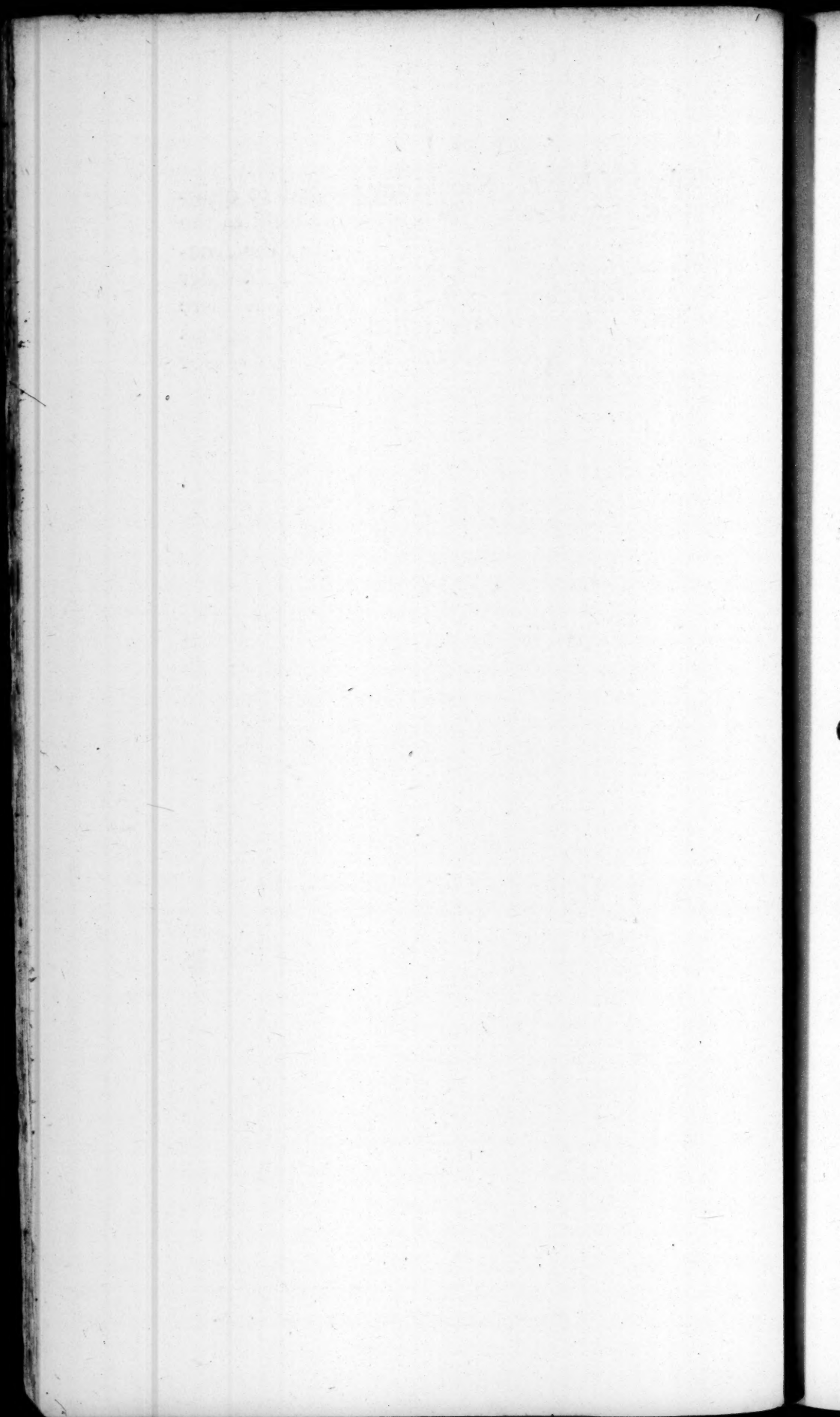
In fine, different men according to their different capacities, prejudices, or interests, will see the subject in different lights, and, without tainting their integrity, will adopt different measures of action. If a zealot be alarmed for his creed, 'tis because he thinks his creed essential to the happiness of his country. If one patiently and prudently endeavors to get rid of a grievance by degrees, and another resolutely refuses to ask any relief till he can obtain all, they differ only as two creditors differ, when one will have all the debt or none, the other will take it by parts as the debtor can pay. Would it become an assignee, in a case of bankruptcy, when one creditor signs the bankrupt's certificate, and another refuses, to tax the first with destroying the nature of honesty, or the last with being void of humanity? both may aim at their country's good. It is not for this obscure though disinterested pen to determin whose is the greatest merit, yet if it be not presumptuous, it will venture to scribble, that such as consider bad but *old* maxims of government, as they consider bad habits of body, and apply in both cases a simular, that is, a slow relief, seem to have had the most comprehensive view of the matter. The body politic like the natural body is subject to diseases,
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whose disagreeable circumstances will call for a prescription: not the violent *recipe* of a quack, nor even of some great physician, by him cautiously prescribed to one, by others indiscriminately vended to all, not though it be sanctified by *patent*, and graced with the names of a thousand recovered invalids: but, on the contrary, that relief which the cool and cautious penetration of the prudent practitioner directs.—Happy for the good people of England that medicins are mostly distasteful, or else in defiance of reason they would have been poisoned by patent before now! Happy also for their morals that violent tempers provoke, that gentle measures conciliate, otherwise they might have *exchanged*, but they would not have *repented* their crimes!

A large and comprehensive view of men and things best interprets the wise man's saying, *There is a time for every purpose, and for every work!* Seperations in ethics perhaps like dissections in anatomy may produce queer effects, particularly in the various *means* used by good men to please God and to profit mankind, as in this matter of petitioning; but all that labor in the good cause of truth, viewed in their whole, each throwing some light on the subject, and all together producing at last a solid system of religious liberty, will discover a lovely symmetry. Such a view an excellent German historian had, when he praised *Luther* for making homely rhymes for the country-people: *Erasmus* for the facetiousness of his colloquies: *Sainte Aldegonde* for the comical tales in his romish hive: and old *Beza* for composing a song for the people of Geneva: these men had studied human nature, they thought *that a bait which caught a fish*, or in better stile, *that he who winneth souls is wise*: and by these they conducted their brethren to the serious and sober folios of Calvin and others; all conspiring to dethrone the barbarity and tyranny of the
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the bishop of Rome. Should any pretend to quibble at the little escapes of such men, the bulk of the world would know no more of it than of the Anatomists *inter scapularia*, and the rest would consider it as a north-country *Lilly-Low*, that is, a mere straw-fire. Heaven prosper all that love religious liberty! May they *live in peace!* May *the God of love and peace be with them!*

LETTER



L E T T E R I.

O N

CANDOR IN CONTROVERSY.

Lis nunquam; toga rara; mens quieta. MARTIAL.

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L E T T E R I.

ON CANDOR IN CONTROVERSY.

S I R,

BE ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, is an excellent exhortation of S. Peter's to the primitive church. Christianity is elegantly stiled *the hope that is in you*: this hope, the apostle says, is *rationaly* to be accounted for to every man that asketh. But what an essential in edifying controversy are men directed to! *meekness and fear*! The question and the answer, the accusation and the defence, the inquiry and the apology are mutually concerned in it. Happy for the christian world had she obeyed this admirable direction!

Suffer it to be said Sir, that if your letter abounds with fine reasonings; if those reasonings be made to serve a mistaken zeal; that generous and patient docility with which it closes is its highest praise, and throws a kind of sunshine over all. Man's whole interest is truth, and the pursuit of it his noblest effort. You blame the late petitioners; you maintain the necessity of subscription; you involve magistrates, ministers and people, in an obligation to support the present system, as if all would suffer in its demolition. Yet after all you desire to hear what can be said against your arguments: Your mind, like a nicely-poised pair of scales, being ready to preponderate either way, on which side soever evidence shall fall. Is not this to atone for all your mistakes? Is not this to possess the finest state of mind in the world? Your friend may, without flattery, say that your behaviour is a comment on S. Peter's advice.

Should the answer be given in the same spirit in which the inquiry is made, friendship will cement though sentiments differ.

A friend of yours, a man of infinite complaisance to the ladies, sat down one day to study the opinions of the primitive fathers on baptism; after others, he began Tertullian's book on that subject. That book, you know, is intitled *Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian, Presbyter of Carthage, on Baptism, against Quintilla*. Imagining that the African father was as great an admirer of the ladies as himself, he did not doubt but he should be much edified by Tertullian's addressing QUINTILLA on baptism. Wisdom, gravity and politeness, said he to himself, are united here to be sure. But how would you have smiled had you seen his pannic, when he discovered in the fifth line of the first chapter that Tertullian falls to abusing her, calling her a heretic, a viper, a serpent, an asp, a most monstrous creature whose doctrine was of the most poisonous kind. Hah! cry'd he, is this an African *tete a tete*! Is this your spirit Tertullian! If you're a gentleman, where's your breeding? If a christian, where's your meekness? If a philosopher, where's your good sense? Well, well, said he (closing the huge book) perhaps Quintilla and you may be well met. E'en scold it out. I'll go seek a gentler tutor.

The question here is not whether your friend's conclusion from the premises was quite logical; whether asperity and argument may not be sometimes united; but whether passionate writers do not generally produce similar effects on their readers. People are naturally prepossessed in favor of a sufferer; they naturally become prejudiced against such a violent pleader; they can't help saying, What's the matter? If your accounts be right why so prodigiously agitated? You surely design to impose on
us,

us, and would deter us from detecting you. You are certainly conscious of having maintained a defenceless cause, and you are making effrontery supply the place of argument: thus giving us brass instead of gold.

People are never safe with antagonists of this fierce temper, they are formidable beyond expression in some places. Hence that smart reply of Dr. De Launoi at Paris. The Dr. had made free to censure that angel of the schools Thomas Aquinas. The Dominicans were exasperated at this, and apologized for their angelical doctor. One day a friend said to De Launoi, "You have disgusted all the Dominicans, they will all draw their pens against you." Said he, with a malicious air, "*I dread their pen-knives more than I do their pens.*"

Your candid and disinterested pursuit of truth Sir, naturally contrasts itself with the absurd conduct of others, and their folly is a shade to your glory. The indolent prefer an easy faith to a painful search, and their reason bleeds on an altar erected to the love of ease. The impatient, like Pilate, ask, *What is truth?* But never wait for an answer. The proud, though not infallible, are always in the right. The sons of luxury or avarice, like Esau, prefer a meal to a birth-right. What a waste of goodness would it be to propose truth to these? Their minds are preoccupied, and till their vices are dispossessed, it is morally impossible to alter them. A writ of ejectment is the first part of a process with them.

A thousand apologies may be made for studious and serious men, when they miss their way in an argument. The prejudices of education, the want of information, the influence of company and example, gratitude for a past favor, hope in a future one, these, and more such topics will always afford pleas for honest mistaken men, pleas which may diminish the
guilt

guilt of an error, though they cannot assign to it the merit of truth.

To which of these causes your mistakes about subscription are owing is not the question now. It is enough that you are open to conviction. Friendship cannot refuse your request, you will therefore receive a letter on each subject in dispute as a multitude of avocations will allow; and should you in the issue see cause to change sides, you would but follow the greatest men in their greatest actions. Did not Cicero, the glory of Rome, condemn in his riper years some of his juvenile pieces? Has not Hippocrates, the prince of antient physicians, owned himself deceived in his judgment of the futures in the skull? Is not half S. Paul's conversion a public renunciation of his former sentiments? And pray did ever any body imagin that this lessened their glory? It increases it, you'll say, as more skill and resolution are needful to correct a bad habit, than to avoid contracting one.

Indeed, the man who undertakes to correct one's mistakes does one a great honor. He remonstrates in hope of reclaiming, but before he can hope to reclaim, he must presuppose all those amiable dispositions which enable a man to say, *I AM MISTAKEN*. Yet why should any man be ashamed of saying so? All men make mistakes, there is but one article in which wise men and fools differ; a wise man reforms his mistakes, a fool perseveres. Mr. Bayle's sensible letter to his friend Professor Du Rondel is not forrain from the purpose. " I take notice (says he) " of some errors committed by persons, for whom " I have an extraordinary esteem, and who honour " me with their love. Such as I shall spare will " have some reason to complain of me, as it will be " an indication that I imagined they are incapable " of hearing reason, or able to sustain the least loss. " The

“ The former have so ample a reputation, and such
“ vast treasures of glory, that an hundred ship-
“ wrecks could not do them any prejudice. If there
“ are any whose errors ought to be passed over, it is
“ chiefly the poorer sort, who on such an occasion
“ would be plundered to their very shirts, was any
“ one to fall upon their frippery.”

Bayle's comparison of men of genius and learning to men of fortune is pretty, but it must be said, that they who can best afford a loss do not always suffer one with a good grace. It is not the ability but the temper that reigns here. Men of learning, like men of fortune, can often better afford a loss than they can bear one. And this perhaps is the reason why persons of inferior abilities often discover truths which their superiors cannot: A supreme, disinterested love to truth presides in their inquiries.

You lament, (and indeed who can help lamenting?) the bad spirit of too many religious controversies. Religion is a sacred thing, and meekness is a part of it: Whence then is it, that prejudice and passion in some, fire and flame in others, appear in these disputes? The gospel is nothing of all this; the gospel needs nothing of all this; all this disgraces the gospel: For which reason perhaps our Saviour forbade the devils to publish his mission.

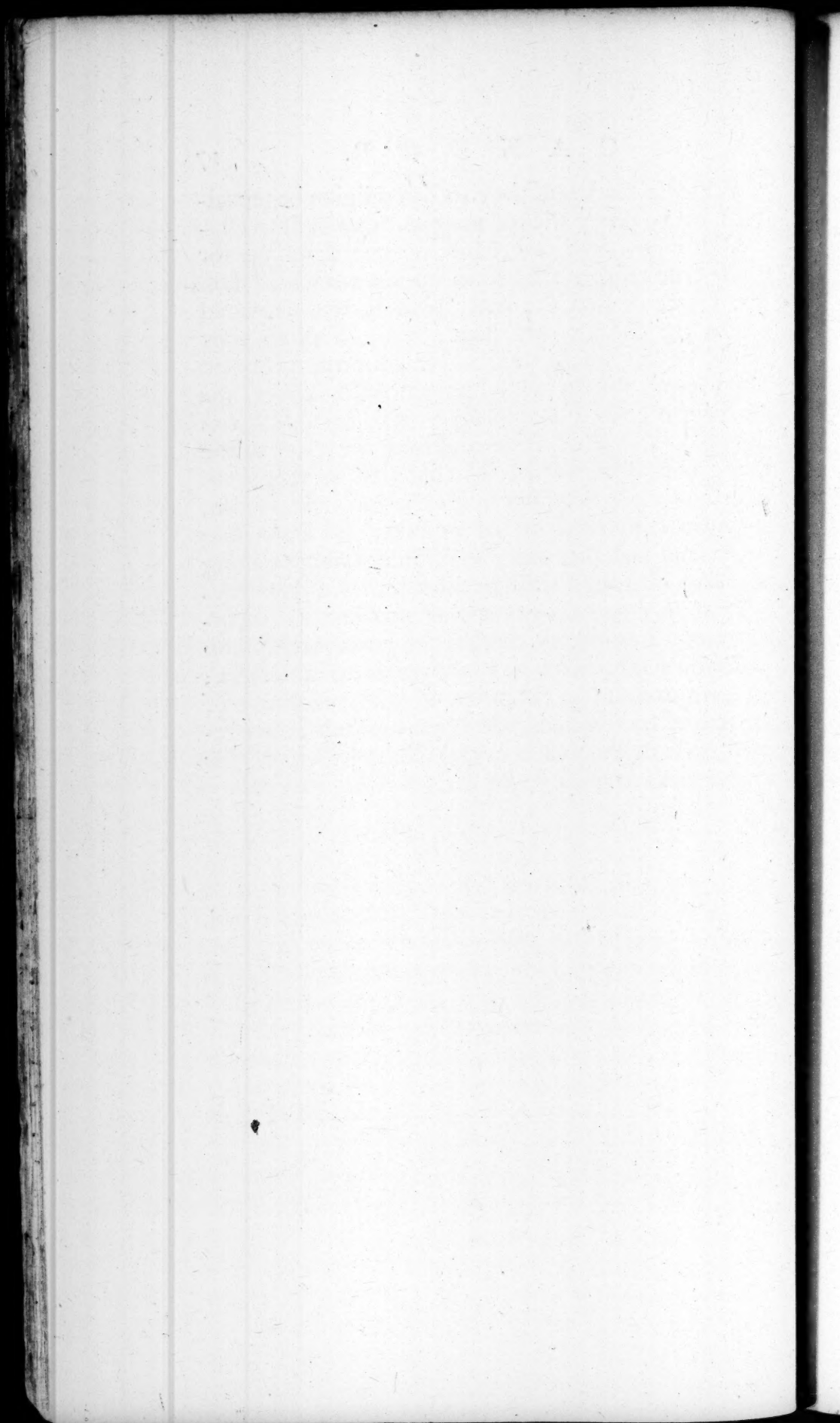
The fierce disputes of Christians have always scandalized the good cause, and will always continue to do so, till mildness and moderation succeed violence: and then christianity will reassume her primitive habit, and with that her native prevalence. Errors like prostitutes may paint themselves and pay their bullies, but let truth, especially religious truth, disdain such aid, and show the world a more excellent way.

There is in the life of Archbishop Tillotson a fine example of the deportment here pleaded for. While
Dr.

Dr. Tillotson was Dean of Canterbury he preached at Whitehall, before his Majesty Charles the Second, a Sermon in which were these words. “ I cannot think, till I be better informed (which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of conscience warrants any man, that is not extraordinarily commissioned, as the apostles and first publishers of the gospel were, and cannot justify that commission by miracles, as they did, to affront the established religion of a nation, altho’ it be false, and openly draw men off from the profession of it, in contempt of the magistrate and the laws. All that persons of a different religion can in such case reasonably pretend to, is to enjoy the private liberty and exercise of their own consciences and religion, for which they ought to be very thankful,”—&c. &c. When the Dean had ended his sermon, said a certain nobleman to the King, who had been asleep most part of the time, *’Tis pity your Majesty slept, for we have had the rarest piece of Hobbism, that ever you heard in your life.* Ods fish, replied the King, *he shall print it then.* The Dean was accordingly ordered to print it. He did so, and as soon as it came from the press, sent one, (as he usually did) to his friend, the rev. Mr. John Howe. Mr. Howe (you know) had been ejected for nonconformity, and was at that time pastor of a congregation in London. On reading the Dean’s sermon he was exceedingly troubled at the above-cited passage, and drew up a long expostulatory letter on the subject. He signified how much he was grieved, that in a sermon against popery he should plead the popish cause against all the reformers. He insisted upon it, that we had incontestible evidences of the miracles wrought by the apostles, and that we are bound to believe them, and take religion to be established by them, without any farther expectations.

“ What

" What (said he) must the christian religion be repealed, every time a wicked governor thinks fit to establish a new religion? Must no one stand up for the true religion till he can work a miracle?" &c. Mr. Howe carried the letter himself, and delivered it into the Dean's own hand, who, thinking they should be less interrupted in the country, proposed Mr. Howe's dining with him at Sutton-court, the seat of the Lady Falconbridge. The invitation was accepted, and Mr. Howe read over the letter to the Dean, and enlarged on its contents, as they were travelling along together in his chariot. The Dean, at length convinced of his mistake, fell a weeping freely, and said that this was the most unhappy thing that had of a long time befallen him. I SEE (says he) WHAT I HAVE OFFERED IS NOT TO BE MAINTAINED. Let bigots censure the good Archbishop Tillotson's friendship and tenderness to dissenters; let them exclaim at his want of zeal; exclusive of the rest of his conduct, the single example above recited, will make you cry with Bishop Burnet, *His conduct needs no apology, for it is above it.* Farewell.



L E T T E R II.

O N

UNIFORMITY IN RELIGION.

*Jura. Sed Jupiter audiet. Eben
Baro! regustatum digito terebrare salinum
Contentus perages, si vivere cum Jove tendis. PERSIUS.*

L E T T E R II.

ON UNIFORMITY IN RELIGION.

S I R,

LEGISLATION is doubtless a sacred thing: It is a divine imitation of the government of mankind, and is deservedly assigned to the first in birth, property, and skill: But, the history of all nations will prove, that in parliaments, as in paradise, the serpent has found a way to corrupt and deprave. Ignorance or interest, negligence or pride, have too often prevailed over the generous principles which ought to influence these gods of mankind; and one age has been driven to repeal the laws of a former: So that perhaps legislation would furnish a large history of the extravagancies of the human mind, among which an ACT OF UNIFORMITY would appear one of the greatest. Britons boast of their laws, and in general with great reason: But some of them blush for their country when they read a law intitled an act of UNIFORMITY.

It would be forrain from the present purpose to enquire the origin of this law,

To whom related, or by whom begot, it may be more proper to shew that religious uniformity is an impossibility, and that a law of this kind can neither be argued from the light of nature, nor from the holy scriptures. The idea of uniformity is neither the idea of a philosopher, nor of a christian. The fabrication of this law therefore by men who had a just right to both these titles implies a moment's absence.

Sound policy requires legislature to preserve its dignity, but the dignity of legislature is never more prostituted

prostituted than when impracticable edicts are issued. The dignity of legislation depends more on enforcing than on inventing a law: The latter may be done by a pedant in his study, but the first must have power, property, magistracy, penalty, in a word, authority to support it: and this energy is its dignity. Where a tax is levied which the people cannot pay; where a kind of obedience is required which the people cannot yield; the legislators are forced to dispense with the obedience required. And what follows? the people despise a folly which could not foresee, a narrowness of capacity which could not comprehend, a timidity which dare not, or a weakness which cannot enforce its decrees. Did not all Europe deride the absurdity of those magistrates, who, in the reign of Mary, cited by their commissioners, Fagius and Bucer, who were both dead and buried, to appear and give an account of their faith? and, as if that was not quite ridiculous enough, caused their bones to be dug up out of their graves and burnt for Non-APPEARANCE!

Aut nunquam tentes, aut perforce||, is an excellent motto, and no where more rationally applied than in the matter of lawmaking. Had this been attended to, (but who that attends to the transactions of the year 1559 can wonder that it was not?) an *Act of Uniformity* could never have been passed. The impossibility of enforcing it might have been foreseen; nor ought it to be wondered at if five years after, “her Majesty was informed, that some received the communion kneeling, others standing, others sitting. Some baptized in a font, some in a basin; some signed with the sign of the cross, others not.” In vain the queen attempted to enforce the act by penalties; In vain have succeeding princes endeavored

|| *Either never attempt any thing, or go through with it.* The motto of his grace the Duke of Dorset: And nobly exemplified in that ancient and illustrious family.

U N I F O R M I T Y.

devoured to inforce it; In vain were the formidable forces of oaths, subscriptions, fines, and prisons brought into the field; cruelty and lenity, madness and moderation, the gentleness of the eighteenth, and the rage of the seventeenth century have been employed in vain; the act stands disobeyed and unrepealed to this day.

Make religion what you will; let it be speculation, let it be practice; make it faith, make it fancy; let it be reason, let it be passion; let it be what you will, *Uniformity* in it is not to be expected. Philosophy is a stranger to it, and christianity disowns it.

A philosopher holds that the system of the Universe is perfect; that the duty and glory of man is to follow not force nature; that moral philosophy is nothing but a harmony of the world of spirit with the world of matter; that all the fine descriptions of virtue are nothing but essays on this conformity; thus he proves that moral evil is the production of natural evil, moral good the production of natural good. A philosopher would say to a legislator as the poet to a man of taste;

To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
To rear the column, or the arch to bend,
To swell the terras, or to sink the grot,
In all, let NATURE never be forgot.

Give a philosopher a farm, and injoin him to cultivate it *en philosophe*§, he will study the soil, the situation, the seasons, and so on, and, having comprehended what his farm is capable of, he will improve it accordingly. In the same manner he directs his garden, and every plant in it, never expecting to *gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles*. What would he? Yea what would the unphilosophized farmers say of an *act for the uniformity of husbandry*?
An

§ As a philosopher.

An act of *Uniformity*, say the honest rustics, what's that? What's that! Why you must grow nothing but wheat. How! Say they, some of our lands are too light, they will produce none: We can grow rye there indeed: We have some even not worth ploughing for rye, however they will serve for a sheep-walk, or at worst for a rabbit-warren. Thus NATURE teaches men to reason, and thus they reason right.

Go a step farther. Make this philosopher a tutor, and commit to his tuition a company of youths; he will no more think of *uniforming* these young gentlemen, than of teaching his horse to fly, or his parrot to swim. Their geniusses differ, says he, and I must diversify their educations: NATURE has formed this for elocution, and that for action. And, should the blind fondness of parents complain, his answer is ready, *What was I that I could withstand God?* In short, place such a man in what disinterested sphere you will, and his principles guide his practice; except indeed he should be chosen to represent a county, then probably, not having the fear of philosophy before his eyes, he might vote for an *Act of Uniformity*.

A law that requires uniformity either requires men to be of *the same sentiments*, or to practise *the same ceremonies*. Now if it should appear that the first is impossible, the last will fall of itself. For then the question will be, Ought two men who confessedly differ in sentiment, to profess that they agree? Ought an honest man to *be* one thing, and *appear* another? Heaven forbid that any should maintain so dangerous a thesis!

You are a man of extensive knowledge, you know the ancient and modern creeds; you remember that Harry the eighth enjoined "*all preachers to instruct the people to believe the whole bible*", THE THREE
 " CREEDS,

" CREEDS, *the Apostle's, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, and to interpret all things according to them.*"

You know that in Edward the sixth's reign, TWO AND FORTY ARTICLES, drawn up by Cranmer and Ridley, were thought necessary to be published, *for the avoiding diversity of opinions, and establishing consent touching true religion.* In the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, you know, ELEVEN articles were "*set out by order of both Archbishops, Metropolitans, and the rest of the Bishops, for the UNITY of Doctrine to be taught and holden of ALL Parsons, Vicars and Curates; as well in testification of their COMMON CONSENT in the said doctrine, to the stopping of the mouths of them that go about to slander the ministers of the church for DIVERSITY of judgment, &c.*" Two years after all the former were reviewed, and THE WHOLE BIBLE, *the THREE creeds, the TWO AND FORTY articles, and the ELEVEN articles,* were collected into one aggregate sum, and made THIRTY-NINE. Subscription to these has been essential ever since, which subscription *is an argument* (as his Majesty's declaration says) *that ALL Clergymen AGREE in the TRUE, usual, literal meaning of the said articles.*

Whatever be the *true* meaning of these articles, it is not only certain that Clergymen explain, and consequently believe, them in different and even contrary senses: but it is also credible that no thirty-nine articles can be invented by the wit of man, which thirty-nine men can exactly agree in. It is not obstinacy, it is necessity.

Suppose the thirty-nine articles to contain a given number of ideas, and, for argument's-sake, suppose that number to be fifty: Suppose the capacities of men to differ, as they undoubtedly do, and one man's intelligence to be able to comprehend fifty, a second's five hundred, and a third's but five and twenty. The first may subscribe these fifty points

D

of

of doctrine, but who can confine the genius of the second? Or who can expand the capacity of the last? In minds capable of different operations, no number of points of doctrine can possibly be fixed on as a standard for all, for fix on what number soever you will, there will always be too many for the capacities of some, and for others too few. If this be the case who can establish an uniformity of sentiment? What earthly power can say "WE WILL NOT ENDURE ANY VARYING OR DEPARTING IN THE LEAST DEGREE?"

Moreover, it may be asked whether all these points of doctrine be capable of an *equal* degree of evidence, and if not whether it be possible to enforce an *uniform* degree of belief. Take for example two propositions. "*The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England.*" "*Athanasius's creed—may be proved by most certain warrants of holy scripture.*"

The first of these propositions is capable of demonstration, but the last is very doubtful, and if the degree of assent ought to be exactly proportional to the degree of evidence, a magistrate, who would establish uniformity, must either give falsehood the evidence of truth, or oblige men to believe a probable as fully as a certain proposition. But if neither of these can be done, what becomes of uniformity? An uniform assent to fifty propositions, some of which are probable, others certain, and others, (*pace tantis talibusque viris*†) false!

It is the easiest thing in the world to retire, sit down, invent and publish a system on any subject. Imagination, always prolific, contributes largely: And it is not difficult to erect an ideal world with Berkley; an ideal republic with Plato; or in short a philosophical romance of any kind. All sorts of men, Poets, Philosophers, Orators, Divines, some
of

† *Begging pardon of so many illustrious men.*

of each class have erred on this head; the most ingenious wandering the farthest. But when these romantic machines are applied to real life, to the tillage of a field, the government of a state, the forming of a church, they appear only elaborate trifles: amusive, but not useful. If such ingenious inventors are great men, there is another class greater still, a class whose motto is *DUCE NATURA SEQUAMUR* †.

After all, what is uniformity good for? Is it essential to salvation? Is it essential to real piety in this life? Does it make a subject more loyal to his prince? A husband more faithful, or a parent more tender? Can't a man be honest and just in his dealings without knowing any thing about S. Athanasius? Nay, has not this act produced more sophistry and cruelty than any other act of parliament from the reformation to this day? Not secular but spiritual severity, not the sophistry of the bar but the sophistry of the church.

Did the great Supreme govern his empire by an act of uniformity, men might be damned for believing too little, seraphs degraded for believing too much. The creed of the inhabitants of Saturn might be established, and theirs that dwelt in the moon only tolerated: In such a case, what a fine field of controversial glory would open to the divines of these two provinces of the kingdom *de origine mali*? || Almighty father, Can a blind belief please thee? Can thy creatures believe what they cannot perceive the evidence of? Can all understand the evidence of the same number of truths? Formed with different organs, educated in different prejudices, dost thou require the same services? Art thou indeed the *hard master who reapest where thou hast not sowed*? Far from all thy subjects be such a thought!

Conclude then, worthy Sir, that if God be a rock,

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and

† Let us follow where nature leads. || On the origin of evil.

and his work perfect, if VARIETY be the characteristic of all his works, an attempt to establish UNIFORMITY is reversing and destroying all the creator's glory. To attempt an uniformity of color, sound, taste, smell, would be a fine undertaking; but what, pray, will you call an attempt to establish an UNIFORMITY OF THOUGHT?

You will say, Christianity is not the religion of nature, but the religion of revelation; what therefore may seem absurd to philosophy may be explained by christianity. Perhaps the founder of our holy religion may have established uniformity? If he has, uniformity may be a christian though not a philosophical idea. Well, this shall be enquired in the next letter. Mean time farewell.

LETTER

L E T T E R III.

O N T H E

R I G H T O F P R I V A T E J U D G M E N T .

*Nec imperiale est libertatem dicendi negare, nec sacerdotale,
quod sentiat, non dicere.*

S. AMBROSE.

III. А. Е. Т. Т. И. И.

51250

RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

LETTER III.

ON THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT,

S I R,

YOU have often admired that dedication to the Pope which is prefixed to a piece of Sir Richard Steele's: intituled, *An account of the state of the Roman catholic religion throughout the world, &c.* "Your holiness, says the writer, is not perhaps aware, how near the churches of us protestants have at length come to those privileges and perfections, which you boast of as peculiar to your own.—The most sagacious persons have not been able to discover any other difference between us, as to the main PRINCIPLE of all doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, but this one, that you CANNOT err in any thing you determine, and we never DO. That is, in other words, That you are INFALLIBLE, and we ALWAYS IN THE RIGHT. We cannot but esteem the advantage to be exceedingly on our side, in this case, because we have *all the benefits of infallibility, without the absurdity of pretending to it*, and without the uneasy task of maintaining a point so shocking to the understanding of mankind." This is not a libel, this is a satire, the worst is, this satirical stroke is true. The Church of Rome refuses the scriptures to the people: Some protestant churches grant the sight of the book, but retain the meaning. Can you see any difference? Search or not search, read or not read, the sense is fixed, 'tis at the peril of your preferment to vary.

Whence church-governors pretend to derive this right does not signify. It can neither be derived
from

from the nature of christianity, the doctrine or practice of Christ or his apostles, the condition of man in a state of nature, his condition as a member of society subject to magistracy, nor indeed in England from any thing but *the act of supremacy*, an act which transferred a power over men's consciences from the pope to the king. His majesty Henry the eighth, by a master-stroke in politics, preferred an indictment against the whole body of the clergy in Westminster-hall, and obtained judgment upon the statute of præmunire, whereby they were all declared to be out of the king's protection, and to have forfeited all their goods and chattels: And then pardoned them on two conditions, first that they should pay into the exchequer 118840l. secondly that they should yield his majesty the title of *sole and supreme head of the Church of England*: A title which by subsequent declarations was so explained as to annihilate the right of private judgment, and yet private judgment gave birth to this very act.

Suppose his majesty Harry the eighth exercising the authority allowed by the act of supremacy; and among other things forming a creed for his subjects: Suppose him a man of shallow capacity, would not his creed have been too lean and poor for many of his subjects? And on the contrary, suppose him a man of an exalted genius, of a prodigious stretch of thought, would not his creed have been too rich and full for many more? But the impossibility of exercising such a power was discussed in the last letter: This is to canvass the legality of it.

No mean can be lawful in itself which destroys the end for which it is appointed. Now the end to be obtained is the establishment of christianity. But how can the depriving men of the right of private judgment be a lawful mean of obtaining that end, seeing christianity is a personal obedience to the laws of

of Christ, arising from a conviction of their excellency, and their connection with certain facts of whose certainty evidence is given, which evidence to be received must be examined? Christianity proposes truths of speculation and truths of practice: If men can examine and ascertain the first by proxy, why not obey the last in the same manner? But who can love or fear, believe or hope by substitution?

If to deny the right of private judgment be destructive of the nature of christianity in general, it is more remarkably so of the christianity of the reformed churches. The right of private judgment is the very foundation of the reformation, and without establishing the former in the fullest sense, the latter can be nothing but a faction in the state, a schism in the church. The language of the reformers must be something like this when they proposed subscription. "Gentlemen, The right of private judgment allowed of God, and supported by all kinds of argument, hath been challenged and exercised by men for upwards of five thousand five hundred years; we ourselves have recovered it from the pope, who had unlawfully usurped this right, and *as God, sat in the temple of God*. In virtue of this right, we have examined the holy scriptures, fixed their meaning, and engaged the king to support a creed which by delegation we have composed for his majesty, and for all his subjects. In us the right of private judgment ceases, and, should England continue five thousand five hundred years longer, no man shall exercise this right without suffering all the penalties we can inflict. Indeed all Europe is but just emerging from barbarity, learning is but in its infancy, and England is torn and rent with civil dissensions. In all probability, peace may succeed war, learning may diffuse itself, and invigorate to maturity, and a hundred years hence men may arise infinitely more capable

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ble than we are : But let succeeding ages improve as they will, all men shall *leave the minster where they find it.*" How say you Sir? Cranmer stained his Archiepiscopal hands with blood, but could even Cranmer have opened the convocation with such a speech as this? Yet speak it or no, 'tis all fact.

The reformers were not to blame for exercising the right of private judgment themselves, their fault was a denial of the same right to others. They had the highest authority for what they did, deriving it from the doctrine and example of Christ and his apostles.

Take one, two, or more of our Saviour's doctrines, and ask, what magic can there be in subscribing them without examination? Himself never proposed such a thing, but on the contrary, exhorted his hearers to *search the scriptures*; a strange impertinence unless the right of private judgment be allowed! Nor did he only exhort the people to judge for themselves, but he also warned his disciples not to usurp that right. *CALL no man your father upon the earth, neither BE YE CALLED masters.* Neither impose your opinions upon others, nor suffer them to impose theirs upon you.

Had Jesus Christ considered the right of private judgment in an unlawful light, he would first have instructed Herod, or Caiaphas, or some of the principal Rabbies: and by them he would have converted the nation. But instead of that, he condemns the doctrines of the church-governors, addresses his sermons *ad populum*, § gives it as a proof of his mission that *the gospel was preached to the poor*, and constantly protects his followers in the exercise of the right of private judgment. When the disciples plucked and ate the ears of corn, they broke two canons of the established church. It was on a sabbath-day; and

§ to the common people.

and probably before morning-service was over: and the church had determined the illegality of what they did. Used to judge for themselves, they thought the church mistaken in this case, ventured to think for themselves, and acted accordingly. Did not Jesus Christ protect them in their claim?

The apostles, worthy followers of such a master, went into all nations preaching a doctrine which no church-governors upon earth believed. Did they deny the right of private judgment? If they had, their expeditions would have been in the Quixotic stile. Did S. Paul write to Corinth? *I speak as to wise men: JUDGE YE what I say.* Did he write to Rome? *Let EVERY MAN be fully persuaded in his own mind.* Every body understood this. The populace at Berea, men and women, *searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so.* The students at Athens desired to *know what the new doctrine* was, of which the apostle spake: For the purpose of search no doubt. The magistrates, as Gallio, declared themselves NO JUDGES IN SUCH MATTERS. And hence the amazing success of his preaching: For what himself calls *preaching with demonstration of the spirit, and power*, S. Luke calls *reasoning in the synagogue every sabbath-day.* Compare Acts xviii. 4. with 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. Who can account for all this without the right of private judgment?

Consider the condition of man in a state of nature; and you will readily grant either that a right of determining for himself is no man's, or every man's right. Vindicate the right to one, and you do it to two, to two hundred, to two thousand, to the whole world: For all in a state of nature are on a level. There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, Prince nor subject: The right of one argued from his nature is the right of all. Whether men forfeit this right in a state of society is another question.

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A Christian not only cannot, but if he could he ought not to dispose of this right, because not only he cannot be a Christian without its exercise, but all the purposes of civil government may be answered without it. The power of the magistrate is an article of importance enough to demand a particular discussion, that therefore shall be the subject of a future letter; let the remaining space of this be filled up with enquiring, whether, if this advantage of private judging had been denied to other classes of men, the world would not have sustained infinite damage?

Chuse of the mechanical arts, or of the sciences, which you please, place it in the state in which it was seven hundred, five hundred, or two hundred years ago; let its then present state be defined, its *ne plus ultra*† determined, let all future search be prohibited, and what an innumerable multitude of useful discoveries are men deprived of?

When Columbus first imparted his designs relative to the discovery of America to Ferdinand king of Spain, his majesty thought proper to advise with his Ecclesiastical counsellors about it. All were against the project, and quoted S. Austin, who, in his book *de civitate Dei*,‡ had declared it impossible to pass out of one hemisphere into another; and had denied that there could be any Antipodes. Seneca, Seneca the heathen, had declared long before, that future ages would discover new worlds, and that Thule would not be the farthest region upon earth. In this case it must be owned that S. Austin was an heretic, and Seneca a sound believer. The king and Columbus ventured to dissent, judged for themselves, and found ample reward for so doing notwithstanding clerical decisions. Indeed S. Austin was not the only person who denied the possibility of Antipodes, the church denied it, that is, the head Pope Zachary denied

† its utmost bounds.

‡ on the city of God.

denied it for all the members. And this is the order that he sent to his legate Boniface Archbishop of Mentz, who had accused Virgil Bishop of Saltzburg of holding the dangerous error of the Antipodes. "If, says the head of the church, " he should be convicted " of maintaining that perverse doctrine, which he hath " uttered against the Lord, and against his own soul, " that is, that there is another world, other men under " the earth, another sun and another moon, call a confistory, degrade him from the honor of the priesthood, *et ab Ecclesia pelle.*" || A fine story for a man to be excommunicated for!

Has not all Europe pitied the fate of Copernicus and Galileo, the fathers of modern astronomy? The first kept his work near forty years before he dared to publish it, and died immediately after it was presented to him, the persecution he dreaded being the supposed cause. As to Galileo, he was charged with heresy, first for affirming that the sun was in the centre; secondly, that the earth was not in the centre, but had a diurnal motion. His works were burnt, himself imprisoned, and being released was enjoined a penance of repeating once a week for three years the seven penitential psalms. As if the penitential psalms said any thing about Galileo's crime! but these are some of the fruits of denying the right of private judgment. The Pope, the sole judge, was pleased to think that these discoveries in geography and astronomy clashed with certain doctrines established in the church.

What a condition would all Christendom have been in by this time, had not this extravagant claim been denied, and the right of private judgment established in arts and sciences? All the received systems of music, astronomy, physics, and of all other arts and sciences, were originally private opinions; probably

|| *and excommunicate him.*

bably they would have been so still, had the inventors been prohibited publishing, or the public examining and receiving them. But now, mankind form into societies, impart their own discoveries, offer rewards to other inventors or improvers of arts and sciences; And what follows? What might be expected; The perfection of science. Thus Cicero accounts for that literary pre-eminence which Greece had over Rome: And thus in all nations and in all ages will the same effects follow the same causes: In England as in Rome the maxim is true, *Honos alit artes.* §

Numerous are the objections made to this doctrine, there are however but two that are worth answering. The first is, That Christianity is perfect and intire in the holy scriptures, that herein it differs from human arts and sciences, that therefore the inquisitiveness necessary for the latter would be highly injurious to the former. To which it may be justly answered that, many people doubt this, as the church of Rome, whose notion is too fully expressed by Cardinal Hosius, who said that the scriptures were of no more authority than Esop's fables, were it not for the authority of the church: As the people called Quakers, who consider the holy scriptures as a secondary rule subordinate to the spirit: And many others who wholly deny their divinity. Now ought not all these people to be allowed the liberty of examining the proofs of the divinity and perfection of the bible? For private judgment which is their malady is also their only medicin. But let the perfection of the holy canon be granted. It will amount to no more than granting the perfection of the works of nature. In both, *invisible things, even the eternal power and Godhead are to be seen and UNDERSTOOD by the things that are made.* The word of revelation,

§ Honors encourage arts.

velation, like the works of nature, present objects to view, but objects to be examined and understood: And how can this be without the right of private judgment? You say the scriptures give a perfect account of the nature of God, the nature of man, the vanity of the life that now is, the certainty of the life that is to come; but how is another man to know this unless you allow him to examin and determin for himself? It may be a perfect rule, it may be a subordinate rule, it may be a false rule, it may be no rule at all, for any thing he knows who must not examin, or if he examines must not determin: For to retain the meaning is to retain the book: And there's no real difference between denying the examination and denying the conclusion. You know the story of father Fulgentio: Preaching at Venice on Pilate's question *What is truth?* He told his hearers that at last after many searches he had found it out, and held out a New-testament, and said that there it was in his hand; but then he put it in his pocket, and coldly said; *But the book is prohibited.* Now what great difference would there have been if he had said, *You may read the book, but its true meaning is prohibited?* Yet this is what all the Arminian clergy in England must say, if they speak consistently with themselves: For in the opinion of all impartial judges the established religion is Calvinism.

The other objection is, that this will open a door to all sorts of heresies, and the truth will be oppressed and disappear. Indeed! And is truth such a timorous cowardly thing? What idle fears are these! Should an honest man be taxed with dissoluteness and impiety, and should any propose to him a fair trial before impartial judges, would he be frightened at it think you? Christianity is not to be loaded with calumnies, she is so already, her only hope is a fair trial.

But

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But to abridge the matter. Do not facts contradict this? Is not the church of Rome full of heresy? Has not the gospel and the right of private judgment gone hand in hand in the reformation? Is the power and promise of God nothing? Has he not engaged to support his church? Does not every thing proposed to men relate to some operation of their minds? Does not a rational fancy protect the truth of imagery in poetry, and an honest conscience religion? Strange errors have been proposed which the penetration of church-governors could neither foresee, nor provide against, and it has happened to them as to monstrous images in poems, they are dead, and buried, and exploded, and the public taste not injured thereby. Take one example, your sagacity will apply it. Here lays now on the desk a folio poem, in xxiv Cantos, intitled *Psyche*, or Love's mystery. This is a second Edition, from the University-press 1702. The author is Dr. Beaumont, late Regius professor of divinity, and master of S. Peter's College in Cambridge. The preface tells you that "the *true genius* of poetry is little regarded, or rather not subject at all to common capacities." Here follows a verse of that kind from the first canto. 'Tis the devil in council he is speaking of.

Three times he shak'd his horns; three times his mace
He brandish'd towards heav'n; three times he spew'd
Fell sulphur upward: Which when on his face
It foused back, foul blasphemy ensu'd
So big, so loud, that his huge mouth was split
To make full passage to his rage and it.

The Devil spewing and swearing till he split his mouth! Is not this *above common capacities*? Is not this in the *true genius* of poetry? Is the genius of poetry in danger from such poetical heresy as this?

Farewell.
LETTER

L E T T E R IV.

O N

C I V I L M A G I S T R A C Y.

*Majores nostri, Patres conscripti, neque consilii, neque
audaciæ unquam eguere: neque superbia obstabat, quo
minus aliena instituta, si modo proba, imitarentur.*

CÆSAR APUD SALLUST.

LETTER IV.

ON CIVIL MAGISTRACY.

S I R,

IF mankind be considered physically, their uniformity seems an impossibility. If they be considered morally as members of a christian church, they still retain a right to judge for themselves, none of their church-governors can deprive them of that right by arguments drawn from the religion they profess. It remains now to enquire whether the civil magistrate has such a right. Has he any thing to do with the consciences of his subjects while the peace of society is safe? A short detail of the origin, the nature, and the end of civil government will probably incline you to answer No.

Let magistracy originate where it will, let it proceed from nature, from God immediately, from the people, or from power; it is immaterial: From none of these sources can there flow a right over the consciences of the subjects.

A natural magistracy is such a government as Adam had over his descendants during his natural life; and such a one any man would have, who, transported with his wife into a desolate island, should people that island with his own children and grandchildren. Such a magistrate, so far from denying his children the right in question, would naturally become both prince and priest to them, and would himself propose, as soon as he found them capable, what he had discovered of the deity to their examination. Happy in the enjoyment of religious science himself, he would long to impart, nor would his happiness be complete till his auditors by their

own powers had examined, relished, and received the truth. Should there be a fool in his little empire who could not, or an obstinate subject who would not use the right of judging for himself, it would give him the most exquisite pain: And should any protest that after their best search they could not perceive the evidence of some things asserted by their princely parent, he would naturally conclude that youth, inexperience, want of capacity, were imperfections of nature in them, but no crimes; that for his own part he was not infallible, that possibly himself might be mistaken: In short he would have no notion of a crime, and therefore would inflict no penalty. Is it credible that when Enoch prophesied in the first religious assemblies he enforced his prophecies with penal laws? Would the father of his people act so? To parents the argument appeals.

Magistracy is sometimes obtained by power, that is, by conquest. But, whatever claims such conquerors may make, nothing can be argued for their legality; the conquest itself, on which the claim is founded, being an act of injustice. Perhaps policy, more than superstition, made the Romans when they besieged a place not only invite the tutelary god of the place to come out and leave the besieged, but also promised that *the same, or a more solemn worship should be paid to him by the Romans*: EUNDEM AUT AMPLIOREM APUD ROMANOS CULTUM. The policy of conquerors pleads for the right of the people, though their equity should be silent.

If magistracy be immediately derived from God, it is not supposable that God should require a magistrate to exercise a power which himself does not exercise. How injurious to the supreme being to suppose him creating men with capacities and dispositions for judging for themselves, and instituting an order of men to suppress those qualifications? How
injurious

injurious to his goodness and equity to suppose him requiring a duty of the magistrate, which he has given him no ability to perform! God thus requires impossibilities. When the Jews were under a Theocracy, and *there was no king in Israel, every man did what was right in his own eyes*: And when Moses was immediately appointed of God to govern them, not only in their morals was divorcement tolerated; but in their religion they were suffered to carry *the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their God Remphan, figures which they made to worship*. The planet Saturn, whose persian and syriac name is said to be *Chiuu*, and whose egyptian name is *Remphan*, is the supposed object of that idolatrous worship. It must be owned that Moses published very severe laws against idolatry, but whether it was that he found severity not answer the end, or whatever was the cause, there was an omission of circumcision, and the passover, all the time of his government, (he practised the former indeed in his own family) and there are traces of extreme toleration all through the history of that people down to the death of Jesus Christ, when Sadducees are found in the high priesthood. That Moses allowed such a toleration is argued from Deut. xii. 8. If it be asked, how can his laws be reconciled with a toleration? Probably, by confining the last to private judging, and the first to overt acts disturbing the peace of society. Let it however be observed, that a not being able to reconcile seeming contradictions in this case does not affect the argument. The omission of circumcision, the allowing of divorces, and the practising of idolatry during the forty years pilgrimage of the Jews are historical facts too well attested to be denied.

After all the reasonings about the immediate derivation of magistratical authority from God, it must be granted, that it is impossible the magistrate should be

be *the minister of God* in any thing disagreeable to his will. Now that it is his will the magistrate should exercise authority over the consciences of his subjects, may be abundantly disproved from the light of nature, and from the holy scriptures. S. Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans about the third year of Nero's reign, is it credible that the subjection he insists on Chap. xiii. is a subjection of conscience to NERO's creed? The primitive christians were not of the magistrate's religion for the space of three hundred years, yet all that time they thought the magistrate *the minister of God for good*. All that time, either the magistrate did not claim, or the church did not allow his claim of the right in question.

If the power of the magistrate be derived from the people, it is impossible he should have a just claim over their consciences. For though the people, coming out of a state of nature into a state of society, give up many private rights in order to obtain other and greater rights; yet this is a right which cannot be supposed to be given up; for two reasons. First, the right itself in its nature is inalienable. No man can any more divest himself of private judging than of thinking. Make what contracts he will, a little attention will convince him that no man ever gave up this right, nor ever can. It is con-natural, deprive him of this and you deprive him of his existence. But secondly, suppose he could resign the right of private judgment to the magistrate, he would not do it but to obtain some greater advantage in its stead. But what advantage can compensate for the loss of liberty of conscience? If any should say the peace of society is obtained by it. Whose peace? Not the magistrates; for malcontents are a trouble to him; not his that loses his liberty. But the proper answer is, that where the peace of society hath been once disturbed through an abuse of toleration,

it

it has been a thousand times disturbed by the opposite spirit of intolerance. Let magistracy originate then where it will, in nature, in conquest, in an immediate appointment of God, or in a mutual contract among men, nothing can be deduced from its origin in favor of a claim over conscience.

This will appear yet plainer if you advert a little to the *nature* of civil government. Civil society consists in a MORAL not a SENTIMENTAL UNION, the preservation of which union is the business of the magistrate. Where a moral union prevails society is safe; where it does not no other unanimity (suppose attainable) contributes any thing. What would it contribute to the peace of society, if an uniformity of sentiment could be established in music, statuary, architecture, or painting, unless at the same time an unanimity in moral obligations prevailed also? On the contrary, how would it injure the peace of society if every one had a different creed on these articles, suppose at the same time a moral unanimity prevailed?

But does not the preservation of this moral union depend on the magistrate's authority over the conscience of the subject? Let an answer to this be deferred for a moment; and let it be asked, whether, suppose the magistrate could preserve the peace as well without exercising this authority as with it, whether in such a case, he would not chuse to let conscience alone? Certainly a wise magistracy would. A wise magistrate is a politician. A politician is a master of human nature. A master of human nature knows that mankind are better governed with than without their consent. Consequently, where he has the choice of two means to obtain the same end, he would chuse that which involves the consent of the subject: And that is, to let him maintain a moral union to society on *his own* principles. But to return to the question.

The

The preservation of a moral union does not depend on the governor's exercising a right over the consciences of the governed. On the contrary, the history of all Christendom will prove, that this very claim has destroyed more moral union than all other pretences whatever. It was a just saying of the Emperor Maximilian II. to Henry III. of France. *Such princes as tyrannize over the consciences of men, attack the supreme being in his strongest part: And frequently lose the earth by concerning themselves too much with heaven.*

“ The direct end of the english constitution is political liberty. Now the liberty of the subject principally depends on the goodness of *criminal laws*, and this liberty is in its highest perfection when criminal laws derive each punishment from the particular nature of the crime. In things that prejudice the tranquillity or security of the state, secret actions are subject to human jurisdiction. But in those that offend the deity, and where there is not any public action, [injurious to the peace of society,] there cannot be any point in question, as to a criminal matter: The whole passes between God and man, who knows the measure and time of his vengeance.” These are the just sentiments of those that best understand the end of civil government, and these sentiments plead for the right here claimed by the subject. Liberty is the end of magistracy. Whose liberty? The magistrate's? Not his only, but the subjects also.

Indeed when a magistrate claims and exercises a right over conscience, he not only deprives his subjects of liberty, but deprives the state also of the services of some of the worthiest of men. Consequently his claim is an injury to the state. Was it possible to raise from the dead the greatest men in their several professions that ever lived, were they all to be assembled

asssembled in England, the state would be deprived of their fine abilities, unless (which no man can be sure of) they would subscribe the established faith.

Diversity of opinions, if judiciously managed, rather tend to discover than to destroy the truth: Hence that proper advice at opening a general assembly of old, *consider the fact, take advice, and speak your minds*: The same notion is conveyed in the very name of the British representation, it is a parliament, that is, an assembly convened to give advice by speaking their minds. If this be a proper method of finding out truth in the state, why not in the church?

To give the magistrate a power over the consciences of the subjects is to annihilate conscience. For example: A gentleman resides in England, acknowledges the power in question, and professes with an oath faith in the 39 articles. He passes from Dover to Calais, and lo! another magistrate requires another faith, he must renounce calvinism, and embrace the faith of the gallican church. He crosses the Alps and appears at Rome, another faith again. Should he pursue his rout and retain his notion of magistracy, he must believe as the Czar believes at Petersburg, as the grand Signior believes in Turkey: If he goes round the world he must be of all religions; or, to speak more properly, if he goes round the world thus, of no religion at all.

The people called Quakers seem to have understood the principles of civil government as well as any people upon earth, and to have practised them more than most sects in Christendom. The first of 24 articles, called fundamental constitutions of Pennsylvania, drawn up by the sensible Mr. Penn, deserves to be written in letters of gold, for its benevolence. "In reverence to God, the father of lights and spirits, the author as well as object of all divine know-
G "ledge,

‘ ledge, faith and worship, I do for me and mine
 ‘ declare and establish, for the first fundamental of
 ‘ the government of this country, that every person,
 ‘ that doth or shall reside therein, shall have and en-
 ‘ joy the free possession of his or her faith, and ex-
 ‘ ercise of worship toward God, in such way and
 ‘ manner as every such person shall in conscience
 ‘ believe is most acceptable to God. And so long
 ‘ as every such person useth not this christian liber-
 ‘ ty to licentiousness, or the destruction of others,
 ‘ that is to say, to speak loosely or profanely, or
 ‘ contemptuously of God, Christ, the holy scrip-
 ‘ tures, or religion, or commit any moral evil or
 ‘ injury against others in their conversation; he or
 ‘ she shall be protected in the enjoyment of the a-
 ‘ foresaid christian liberty by the civil magistrate.”

Here’s an example worthy the imitation of all Eu-
 rope, beautiful in itself, but placed to infinite ad-
 vantage when contrasted with the unnatural perse-
 cutions of many other lawgivers: The Cæsars that
 murdered of old, the Stuarts that butchered of late.
 From the tyranny of the last the colonists fled, and
 of this colony you will say with Horace on another
 occasion,

O matre pulchra filia pulchrior!†

What avails creeping after metaphysical subtleties
 in the schools? Try experiments, as sound philoso-
 phers have done, and on them raise a legislative sys-
 tem. Suppose a modern clergyman, animated with
 the spirit of a Paul, should go on a mission to the sa-
 vages of Canada; what methods would he use to es-
 tablish the faith? Whether he went to the *Algon-*
quins, whose kingdom is elective, or to the *Hurons*,
 whose kingdom is hereditary, it would be immaterial,
 in both he would find a chief magistrate, who has no-
 thing to do to cure a refractory subject, but to say

to

† The daughter is handsomer than her handsome mother.

to one of his guards, *Go and rid me of that dog.* Considering what influence the tyrant's rank naturally gives him, he would endeavor to conciliate himself to him first, and to obtain (if possible) his good graces. He would for the present content himself with secretly abhorring a savage despotism, which he could not controul, and probably would avail himself of Hobbes's maxim. He used to say that, *if he was in a deep pit, and the devil should put down his cloven foot, he would take hold of it to be drawn out by it.* Suppose his majesty should indulge him with an audience, would he dare to say to him, Sire, I am an ambassador of the Great spirit, who made, who preserves, and who, after death, will judge, and reward or punish, all mankind. The obedience which he requires is partly dictated by men's consciences, and fully explained in this book in my hand; a book which the great spirit commanded to be written for our instruction, and received under pain of his displeasure. Your majesty however has the same authority in this nation, as other kings have in their dominions, and it remains with you to determine whether these things be true or false. Not only have none of your subjects a right of examining and determining for himself, but I myself, consistent with my notion of your majesty's supremacy, am ready to renounce all but what your majesty believes as long as I am in your dominions?

O say you, all this is nothing to the purpose, a king has no right over conscience *quatenus* † king, but as a *christian* king: Without this just distinction, you'll be able to prove that if a Canadian king be wrong, his subjects however are right, for they do what God requires, that is, they submit their faith and consciences to *the king as supreme.* Very well. See now what all your fine theory comes to.

G 2

Suppose

† considered merely as a king.

Suppose a Jesuit should convert the king, has he a right to establish Christianity as the papists profess it? No, say all the reformed churches. The right belongs to him *quatenus protestant* christian king. *Quatenus* Episcopalian, says one; *Quatenus* presbyterian says another; not at all says a third, whose voice ought to silence all, *Render unto Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God, the things that are God's,* Farewell,

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

O N

I N N O V A T I O N.

Laudamus veteres, sed nostris utimur annis. OVID.

LETTER V.

ON INNOVATION.

SIR,

DON'T you recollect before the petitions for relief in the matter of subscription were presented to parliament, that a gentleman in company foretold their fate, and grounded his prophecy on a very singular opinion? An opinion, which then the company made light of, but which since has appeared too well-founded. The company expatiated on the equity, the reasonableness, the modesty, of the petition; they urged the good sense, the generous and candid spirit of the government in religious matters; they said there was not an intolerant member of the British senate; they passed the highest and justest encomiums on the known benevolent spirit of the royal family: They put all together and concluded that the bill would pass. I beg leave to differ from you gentlemen, said the good man in question, and to assure you that it will not pass. Not that I doubt any thing you have advanced, but it is an *innovation*, and statesmen always fear, and often justly, innovations. It is not enough, added he, that the whole legislature approves, the people must also be disposed to an act of this kind; and the people you know love the *old pad*. The fate of the petitions you know, the true motives of their rejection are perhaps only known to God: But will there be any evil in examining for five minutes this same INNOVATION? It may amuse a leisure moment, if it does not conduct a single step in life.

It is readily granted that antiquity is sacred, especially in religion, that innovations are sometimes dangerous

dangerous, above all religious ones, yet the advantage arising to the petitioners from an examination of this article is not at all precarious. To urge novelty against their petition is owning, at least not denying, the equity of it, and altering the state of the question prodigiously. The question here is not whether a freedom from subscription be a just, a reasonable right; not whether it be analogous to nature and scripture; not whether a british subject may prudently ask such a right to be established by a british senate; but merely whether the right be not a *new* claim. To this the petitioners would answer, No. The practice of judging for themselves is coæval with mankind, to be traced up to the most remote antiquity. If subjects have not made the claim in form it is because governors have not denied their right. Subscription indeed, they would say, is a novelty, against which numbers have remonstrated ever since its introduction. But allowing ourselves to be innovators, they would add, does not hurt our plea, for we are able to prove that innovation is sometimes the duty and glory of legislators: And we can show that no evil, but much good will follow the allowance of this innovation.

As to the antiquity of subscribing creeds upon oath, nobody surely will be so rash as to affirm this to have been the practice of the first three hundred years after Christ. You will allow Mons. Du-Pin to be a capable and unsuspected judge. His remarks on the three first centuries, with which he concludes the first volume of his *Bibliothèque des auteurs ecclesiastiques*, are extremely judicious. "All Theology, says he, relates to doctrine, discipline, or morality." He gives an abridgment first of the *doctrine* of the primitive churches, and justly remarks that it was essentially the same in all. He abridges also their *morality*, and observes that their morals

were

were as immutable as their doctrine. " But as to
 " their *discipline*, says he, it was different in differ-
 " ent churches, and frequently undergoing a
 " change."—" They were extremely careful to
 " chuse ministers whose MORALS were irreproacha-
 " ble. When those that were ordained by the apos-
 " tles died, THE PEOPLE chose their successors.—
 " The churches of the three principal cities in the
 " world were considered as the first and chief.—The
 " bishop of the church of Rome was looked on as
 " the chief bishop: However, they did not think
 " him *infallible*, and though he was consulted and
 " his opinion of great weight, yet it was not altoge-
 " ther *blindly* followed; EVERY BISHOP BELIEVING
 " THAT HE HAD A RIGHT OF JUDGING IN ECCLE-
 " SIASTICAL MATTERS. It was in the fourth cen-
 " tury, when christianity was publicly professed by
 " the emperor, that the bishops assembled, AIDEZ
 " DE L'AUTORITE DES PRINCES,|| and framed ca-
 " nons to govern the church, the rights of bishops,
 " and an infinite number of other matters." All
 this is strictly true; and if the writings of the fa-
 thers, and the history of the primitive churches be
 closely examined, it will appear that the venerable
 antiquity of the three first ages after Christ, pleads
 for the right in question.

Nobody knows when, or by whom, the creed
 called the *Apostle's creed* was composed; and should
 any plead for its authenticity, it must not be a
 member of the established church, for people would
 naturally say; If the Apostles thought proper to
 compose a creed, no doubt but it was a perfect one;
 by what authority then have you added thirty-nine
 articles, two more creeds, and the whole book of
 Homilies to the creed of a subscriber? Should it
 even be allowed that the Apostles, or any of their

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immediate

|| assisted by the authority of princes.

immediate successors, compiled it, can any proof be brought of their requiring subscription to it on oath? *Call now if their be any Apostle that will answer thee, and to which of the Saints wilt thou turn?*

Let it be allowed that Popery, that farrago of civil and sacred, spiritual and secular things, has tyrannized over the consciences of mankind: can it be denied that some of the most venerable of the English reformers refused all emoluments, and submitted to the severest trials, rather than clog their consciences with subscriptions and oaths? Fox and Coverdale are but two of a venerable number, whose *reverend gray hairs the act of uniformity brought down with sorrow to the grave.*

But waving all the arguments which might be drawn from the primitive times, you cannot but allow, that innovators are sometimes important men, of as great importance as the conservators of a navigable river: for the mechanical, the commercial, the literary, the theological world would all stagnate, and become useless and offensive but for them.—There are Enthusiasts of all kinds, but no greater surely than some immoderate admirers of antiquity. The bawdy and blasphemy of an old Greek or Roman poet shall be distilled in the brain of some ingenious brother, till an *aqua mirabilis* † be extracted, spirituous enough to make some readers merry and others mad. All his blunders shall be referred to certain tropes, figures, or fine turns in rhetoric: His impudence is an *irony*, his ignorance an *hyperbole*, and, when a common reader is shocked at his extravagance, a grave Antiquarian cries, what ails you? You don't understand rhetoric, the poet makes use of a noble figure called a *catachresis*.—When one of these literary Enthusiasts presides in a university, he casts the die, stamps the currency, vitiates the taste of the learned populace, whose su-
periors

† a wonderful water.

periors think for them, and an innovator is necessary to reform and bring back poetry to nature. Let Rhetoricians say what they will, every work of art is so far perfect as it approaches nature, nature is the standard, nature is the critic, nature is the comment after all. To call to the order of nature is innovation.

Indeed innovations, however needful, have been sometimes attended with all but insurmountable difficulties: Yet, these difficulties surmounted, the triumphant heroes are aggrandized for ever: Such is the sense mankind have of innovation! Time was when an Archbishop of Canterbury might say to one of his flock, “ *God hath called me for to destroye thee, and all the false sect that thou art of: By Jesu I shall set upon thy shynnes a paire of pearles, that thou shalt be glad to change thy voice: With many moe wonderful and comuicious wordes.* But even then the spirit of innovating was growing, and in 1360 complained, “ *Lord, thy law is turned upsedown. Lord what dome is it to curse a lewd man, if he smite a priest, and not curse a priest that smiteth a lewde man, and leese his charitie? Christ ordained that one brother should not desire wracke of another: not that he would that sinne should ben unpunished, for thereto hath he ordained kings and dukes, and other lewd officers under them. Lord gif any man smite thy vicar, other any of his clerkes, he ne taketh it not in pacience, but anon he smiteth with his sword of cursing, and afterward with his bodilich sword he doth them to death. O Lord me thinketh that this is a fighting against kind, and much against thy teaching. O Lord whether axedest thou after swardes in time of thy passion to againe stond thine enemies? Nay forsooth thou Lord. For Peter that smote for great loue of thee, had no great thanke of thee, for his smiting.— O sweet Lord, how may he for shame clepen himself* “ *thy*

"*thy vicar and head of the church!*" Thus innovation lisped in its childhood, but at its majority, how gloriously did it speak out in the reformation!

What a miserable, deplorable state was learning in before the reformation! Latin was murdered, Greek was miscalled, and almost every word in the lexicon nicknamed. When Smith, and Cheke, perceiving the absurdity of founding all the Greek vowels and diphthongs like the *iota*, endeavored to reform that abuse, and to restore the Greek tongue to its primitive pronunciation; in vain did Bishop Gardiner, the chancellor, make a solemn decree against the innovation; the Cantabrigians had caught a smattering of the right sound, and, to their honor, persisted obstinately in the novel but true method of pronouncing Greek. There is a time when the *recti pervicax* † is every man's praise.

So necessary was innovation then, that the lowest of the people saw it, and while they pitied their ancestors, who had been imposed on, were determined to *burst their own bonds and go upright*. In vain did the Monks exclaim against *the newe learning*, (as they called the Gospel,) the poor people were exasperated at their old task-masters, and in open court called the priests *Cbuffleheads*. They soon found that free examination was the highway to truth, and they sat about investigating all they believed. *How can these things be* had been heresy for ages: but their innovations made it orthodox, and they inquired into every thing: *for*, as the grave father of English history well reasoned at that time, *who would have judged, but that the Mayd of Kent had been an holy woman and a prophetesse inspired, had not Cromwell and Cranmer tried her at Paules crosse to be a strong whore*.

If innovations in the state and in the schools were necessary,

† *obstinately right*. It is a part of the character which Tacitus gives Helvidius Priscus: the whole is extremely beautiful.

Hist. iv. 5,

necessary, they were more so still in the church, for the ignorance of the clergy was insufferable.—A priest, who served a cure in the city of London, and had the charge of instructing *more than three thousand of God's sheep*, wrote to the beloved in the Lord Jesus Mr. Persie, his Archbishop's (Parker's) chaplain, to know of his *mastership*, whether the word *function* did not mean *utilitie*. This letter was *scriptus te viginti quinque die mensis Junius. Anno 1563*. Alas brother! you might have spared saying by way of apology that you was *pauperes spiritus*:* All the parish knew it, and wished for an innovation.

By a survey of the established church in 1585, and 1586, it appeared, that *after 28 years establishment of the church of England, there were but 2000 preachers to serve 10000 churches; so that there were about 8000 parishes without preaching ministers*. Many of those incumbents were ignorant and scandalous men, while *hundreds of good scholars and pious livers were shut out of the church for non-conformity, and starving with their families for want of employment*. This SURVEY is a curious piece, and an example from it will be an argument for innovation.

COUNTY OF CORNWALL.

Benefice.	Yearly value.	Number of souls.	Name of the incumbent & whether a preacher.	His conversation.	Who ordained him.	Patron.
V. Lan-leverie.	30l.	200	Mr. Batten, no preacher.	He liveth as a potcompanion.	Bp. Alley	W. Kendall.
V. Tretwordreth	Marks 100	300	Mr. Kendal, no preacher.	A simple man.	Bp. Bradbridge.	L. chancellor.
V. Esey.	30l.	60	J. Bernard, no preacher.	A common dicer, burnt in the hand for felony, & full of all iniquity.	Bp. Bradbridge,	Canon of Exon.

If

* *The poor of the spirit*. He meant *poor in spirit*, and thought that phrase signified a mean capacity.

If it were imaginable, that you could divert these remarks from their designed channel, which is to prove the necessity of reforming abuses at all times, and in all places, where they are found, without being frightened at the din of novelty, novelty; if it were imaginable that you could forget this, and reproach the modern church of England with the weakness of her ancestors, you should be told that one *prophet of your own* printed *sweet sips of soul-savingness*, another published a *high-beeled shoe for a dwarf in Christ*; and a third, an *effectual shove for a heavy-arsed christian*.

It is not a senseless interrogation of S. Austin's; *if the wisdom of this world be foolishness with God, what will you call its ignorance and folly?* (Serm. 240. vol. v. Jesuit's Edit.) What indeed! Every body will own the need of innovations then, if no interest be at stake. No member of the church of Rome but would blush now to preach what the infallible Innocent the third was not ashamed to publish. *A male child*, says that pontiff, *as soon as it is born crys A. a female E. that is* by transposition, *Eva, thus acknowledging their descent from Eve, and their title to sin and misery*. What friar would say now-a-days that children are born with a creed in their mouths, which they express in Latin and Hebrew? How would the present honorable House of Commons stare if their preachers bade them *cry to Heaven for a midwife lest their designs should miscarry?* Yet this has been done. Who that preaches before a modern university, would imitate the pious Latimer, whose eloquence once edified *that godlye impe kynge Edward the vi?* The good bishop, preaching once at Cambridge in Christmas time, divided his discourse by a pack of cards; the gentry were *diamonds*, the poor people *spades, hearts*; were *triumphs*, and won the game out of the hand of the pope, *the king of clubs*. Has not your country done well to innovate Sir?

Innovate!

Innovate! England, to her praise be it spoken, has done nothing but innovate ever since the reign of Henry the seventh, till whose time, they say, the king had not a currant-bush in his dominions. She has imported the inventions and productions of the whole earth, and has improved and enriched herself by so doing. New arts, new manufactories, new laws, new diversions, *all things are become new*, and does she boggle at an innovation! The truth is, human knowledge is progressive, and there has been a gradual improvement in every thing; this age knows many things the last was ignorant of, the next will know many unknown to this, and hence the necessity of frequent innovations.

The love of novelty is so far from being dangerous, that it is one of the noblest endowments of nature. It is the soul of science, and the life of a thousand arts; it fixes one to his books, another to his instruments, a third to his experiments, it sets one to calculate at home, another to navigate abroad; 'tis seen every where, the caps of the ladies and the cabinets of the curious, are alike the productions of this disposition. If it be said, this passion defeats itself, and, having explored the whole creation, is as restless as ever. True, it is so, and this proves its sublime original, it will at last terminate on God, and God is an object every way fit to satiate this desire; the incomprehensible grandeurs of his nature for ever and ever affording new delights to the contemplative mind. Perhaps the sacred historian might not so much blame the Athenians for *telling and bearing some new thing*, as for *spending their time in nothing else*.

But what has all this to do with petitioning? A great deal. You say the petitioners are innovators. They deny this, and say they are antiquarians, only not superstitious enough to prefer the rust to the medal.

dal. But without availing themselves of this, they prove that the love of novelty is natural, that it puts men on inventing some things, and improving others; that new discoveries by the people call for new limitations, protections, laws from the state. That the yearly assembling of the states is an allowance of the necessity of abrogating some laws, reforming others, and making new ones. That therefore innovation is neither forrain from the nature of things in general, nor from the british constitution in particular. And they might add that almost all the great men that have appeared in the world have owed their reputation to their skill in innovating. Their names, their busts, their books, their elogiums, diffused through all countries, are a just reward of their innovations. When idolatry had overspread the world, Moses was the minister of a grand and noble innovation. When time had corrupted the institutions of Moses, Hezekiah innovated again, destroying what even Moses had set up; and when the reformatations of others were inadequate, Jesus Christ, ascending his throne, *created all things new*: Twelve innovators went one way, seventy another, *their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world*, reforming and renovating the whole face of the earth. When wealth had produced power, power subjection, subjection indolence, indolence ignorance, and the pure religion of Jesus was debased, here rises an Alfred, there a Charles; Turin produces a Claude, Lyons a Waldo, England a Wickliff; the courage of Luther, the zeal of Calvin, the eloquence of Beza, the patience of Cranmer, all conspire to innovate again. Illustrious innovators! You pleaded for conscience against custom, your names will be transmitted to all posterity with deserved renown!

Still it will be said, Legislators ought not to innovate

novate without cause, nay they ought not to risque an innovation without a moral certainty of great advantages. Be it so. And suppose a senator should ask the repeal of any law, and should urge that all statute law was expository only of the law of nature; that when the former did not square with the latter, it ought to be new cast, and should prove that the law, whose repeal he solicited, was of that kind: Would any body say to that senator, Sir, your reasoning is just, but we must not innovate without cause?

As to the advantages arising from an universal toleration, it is highly probable they would be very great. Lenity in governors naturally produces the surest and noblest effects in the governed. Solomon's counsellors, who were able politicians, remarked this to Rehoboam, *Serve the people*, said they, *answer them, and speak good words to them, then will they be thy servants for ever*. It would remove a mark of infamy from many of his majesty's loyal subjects, whose ambition is only to pass for what they really are, the *heart*y, not the *hired* friends of the constitution. It would destroy the endless strifes about words to no profit, which have too long armed brother against brother. It would disarm popery of its most formidable weapon against protestantism, that is, the endless divisions of protestant communities. Schisms in churches, like factions in states, are more about words than things, and if to extinguish whig and tory be a *chef d'oeuvre* in the state, why is not the extinction of party-names a good work in the church? It will be replied, all this would alter nothing, wise men don't judge now of names but things: And they would continue to do so then. Very true. Statute law does not rule wise men, wise men know a law superior to it, and live

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by

by that law. But do the bulk of mankind know any thing more than names? Do they penetrate beyond appearances? Are they not ready with Hospinian's landlord to believe, if a friar tells them, that Adam was a monk and that Eve was a nun?

People of this class are the proper people (if any are) to subscribe upon oath, for to the number they swear every day one more can be no very considerable addition, nor would they puzzle themselves with enquiring why they were fined for swearing at home, and rewarded for it abroad. Had they learning, did they study the nature and obligations of man, did they deal in matters of conscience, did they use all their learning and influence to diffuse loyalty to the crown, benevolence to men, and piety towards God, did they offer to give every possible security to the civil magistrate, except subscribing another man's creed upon oath, which, in their opinion, was no security at all: Was this the case with the lower orders of men, they ought to be indulged in this article. And since the contrary is evident, they ought not to be dupes to names, and parties, about which they know nothing but the names. There is scarcely one in a thousand that frees himself from the prejudices excited by party-tales. One instance indeed occurs in the life of Junius, the famous professor of divinity at Leyden. A great number of people were met to hear a dispute between Junius and a Franciscan. The people had been made to believe many idle stories about the heretical Junius. An old man bustling in the croud expressed a prodigious desire of seeing this heretic, which, when Junius was informed of, he desired might be granted. The croud made way, the old man marched forward, and, diligently surveying him from head to foot, cried, now I know the falshood of what I have been told. What have you been told? Said Junius. *I was told,* replied he, *that you had cloven feet.*

For

For the sake of these men the innovation (if it must be so called) in question is pleaded for. A fine plea truly! Let them wallow in their brutal prejudices, why should you destroy the felicity of their ignorance?

Softly good Sir: Do you hear S. James? *Ye have despised the poor.* And what then? Why you are very irrational in so doing. All your property is in their hands; they manufacture all you use: They cultivate your lands, manage your cattle, transact almost all your affairs, export your surplus, import your superfluities, the wealth of a peerage is intrusted with them. The dearest part of your comforts are committed to them; they nurse your children in their tenderest and most ductile days, and too often instil into noble blood what time can never exhale, Yea more, your own safety depends on them; they build and man your fleets, they form your armies, they guard you by day, they stand centinel for you at night. You may *despise the poor.* You may even undertake to prove that universal benevolence, the spirit, and the splendor of christianity, ought to be denied them. You may maintain that their stupid credulity ought to be imposed on by names, and their savage zeal kept in its old channel. But prudent people will think otherways, and wish for an innovation. True, they are the dirty feet of the body politic; but their union to the head makes them respectable. For your part, you shall submit to the punishment of hearing an old tale, and a further penalty shall be inflicted on you if you will not apply it. A skilful organist had both his hand and his foot bruised by the fall of a gallery. Whenever the surgeon attended, the musician plied him with, Doctor never mind my foot; direct all your skill to the cure of my hand. The Son of Galen, wearied out with this impertinence in his repeated visits, at

length lost all christian forbearance, flew in his patient's face and bawled out, *You blockhead! If your foot should mortify what would become of your hand!*
Farewell,

LETTER

L E T T E R VI.

O N

O R T H O D O X Y.

*Profecto eos ipsas, qui se aliquid certi habere arbitrantur,
addubitare coget doctissimorum hominum de maxima re
(i. e. de natura deorum) tanta dissentio. CICERO.*

LETTER VI

OF THE OLD

OF THE OLD

LETTER VI.

ON ORTHODOXY.

SIR,

ONE of the most odious reflections that was ever cast on the Gospel is that of father Thomassin. He says, that *the whole earth would have been over-run with heresy, had not the Emperors maintained the faith*. Can there be a more cruel aspersi^on on the truth than this? And pray reverend father, what alliance is there between the faith and the sword? But stop; his reverence is right. By *faith* he means the Romish religion, and by *heresy* he means whatever is not in the Pope's creed; and he is right in affirming, that popery would have been annihilated had it not been in league with the state, and upheld by the sword. But should any man affirm this of the true belief of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he would asperse the Gospel in the most shameful and indefensible manner. Affirm this, venerable father, of a particular modification of christianity and welcome; nobody will contradict you; but affirm this of christianity, of truth itself, of the doctrine and morality of the blessed Immanuel, and thousands will oppose you. Thousands would say; Sir, we reject error, not because you call it heresy, but because we perceive its absurdity. We believe the truth, not because his imperial majesty perceives its evidence, but because we have examined it ourselves, and can't help admitting conclusions having allowed the arguments from which they flow. No, Sir; our religion is founded not on the fear of the Emperor, but on the love of God: and was there neither an Emperor, nor a penal law,
nor

nor a sword upon earth, we should be obliged, if we reasoned justly, to worship God in spirit and in truth. Take back then your ungenerous reflection, beseech your imperial coadjutor to put up his sword in its sheath, and only, (as his office requires) to stand by and keep the peace, while you learn that orthodoxy has nothing in the world to fear, for she is indestructible: she may be attacked, she can never be destroy'd.

Orthodoxy, (like almost all the martial terms of controversies) is a very vague, equivocal word.— In its original and true import, it signifies a *right belief*: But, such is the fate of language! In one latitude it means a belief of one thing, in another the belief of another thing, quite contrary. In this letter, let it stand for what S. Paul calls *the belief of the truth*, not the belief of the truth as it is in this creed, or in that, or in any other, but *as it is in Jesus*: and, without enquiring who is in possession of this truth (which is forrain from the purpose) let it only be examined, whether the truth, or faith in it, be exposed to danger by an universal toleration?

Evidence is the characteristic of truth; and, if father Thomassin means any thing by his assertion, he means, that penal laws have the power of conferring the characteristic of truth upon falsehood.— But what power can give falsehood the evidence of truth? If evidence be the support of a true proposition, the truth stands independent of the magistrate's power, and, supported by evidence, there is nothing left for the magistrate to do. If he means that the bulk of mankind, from the base principles of avarice or fear, will profess to be of the magistrate's sentiments, and, without examining, will maintain his creed, all this is granted; but that such slaves to interest are orthodox believers, or believers at all, is denied. If it be said that the profession of the truth by such respectable personages, will always
influence

influence people to examin what they believe: It is readily granted. But this very examination proves that neither pomp nor penalties characterise truth: It is evidence. Is it credible that such numbers of people in all Europe would have suffered martyrdom for their own sentiments, if punishments could have made that true which was false before, or could have prevailed on the martyrs to believe what they could not perceive the evidence of?

Propositions in books are pictures of objects in nature, and their *truth* lays in the exact conformity of the picture to its original: But what, in the name of logic, has the *truth* of this conformity, or the *perception* of this truth to do with imperial penalties? Suppose a skilful artist should present to public judgment an exact representation of the emperor on canvass. It is a fine painting says one; it is a striking resemblance says a second; I am surprized at your infatuation, says a third, it is not at all like his majesty. A dispute originates, the emperor interests himself in it. Did his majesty condescend to allow the disputants the honor of comparing the picture with the original, probably the difference might be adjusted: Yet perhaps not, for, after all, their different judgments might originate in a difference of their organs; or in a hundred things more. But, originate where it would, Should his majesty say, "Gentlemen, this picture is a *true* representation of my person; and this proposition is a *true* representation of the picture: And if you don't believe both these, I shall refuse you my protection, I shall expose you to a fine, to an imprisonment, to death itself." Does any body imagin that the emperor would maintain orthodoxy? Silence might be imposed, but belief would not be produced.

To the belief of a truth three things are essential, an object, a proposition representative of that ob-

K

ject,

ject, and an operation of an intelligent being assenting to that representation; which assent can be obtained no other way than by the mind's perceiving the agreement of the proposition with its object. Belief or assent is an after-operation of the mind, fixed by the God of nature as immutably as the parts of the body are, and as nature never produced eyes in the hands, nor ears in the heels, so neither did that man ever exist, who could disconcert the order of the operations of his mind. It is not in his power to believe, it is not in the power of any body else to make him believe, truth without evidence. Take the *first* of these essentials, an *object*: God, Moses, Christ, Paul, heaven, hell, death, judgment. All these objects are what they are, independent of emperors, establishments, penalties, oaths, or any thing else of the kind. Take the *second*, a proposition exactly representing the object. That proposition is the *truth*. Now what have emperors, or establishments, or oaths, or penalties to do with the truth of the proposition? Every proposition is either true or false independent of imperial conduct. Moses was a faithful historian, is either true or false, government can vary nothing. Should government enact, Moses was a faithful historian; or on the contrary, Moses was an impostor, it would not at all affect the truth of the proposition. If he was a faithful historian, no act of government can make him an impostor; if he was an impostor, no government can establish his fidelity. So that the object, and the truth of the object, described in a proposition, are as independent on magistracy as the being and motions of the planets. Every proposition in scripture was the same when Juvenal ridiculed it, as when Milton revered it: The same when Nero persecuted as when Elizabeth established it. And had poets and princes never existed, what the bible says of
Moses

Moses would have been either true or false. Poetry and principality, a canon and a ballad are of equal efficacy here, that is, they effect nothing at all.

If neither an object of thought, nor a proposition descriptive of that object, at all depend on the will of the emperor, the only question that remains is, whether the *assent* of the mind to the truth of the description depends on his establishing the proposition by law? His majesty requires all his subjects to believe a proposition under pain of his displeasure. But no imperial edict can alter that order of the operations of the mind, which *the king of kings, and lord of lords* hath established in nature. The subject cannot believe or assent to a truth without evidence; he cannot receive that evidence without examination. In order to perceive the conformity of a proposition with the object it describes, his mind must compare the two together; and if, through a defect in his intellects, he should think the proposition affirms too much of the object, or if, through an abundance of intelligence, he should think the proposition affirms too little, in both cases he would deny the *truth* of the proposition, or the exactness of the description. What must he do in such a case? Can he assent to what he cannot perceive the evidence of? It is impossible. Shall he incur his majesty's displeasure by declaring he cannot receive the proposition for a true one? Shall he, to retain his majesty's favor, make oath against his conscience that he does believe the truth of the proposition? O cruel dilemma! That offends my prince: This affronts my God!

Heu quantum fati parva tabella vehit!||

All this would follow the establishment of *truth* by law, but a great deal worse would follow the establishment of error. For imperial edicts not only can't produce faith, but they, by prohibiting the

K 2

means,

|| *Alas! What great events on little trifles hang!*

means, destroy the end, and generate infidelity. An error established by law, and protected by the sword, gains authority, antiquity, universality, and many more marks, which pass with numbers of honest, but interested, or superficial reasoners, for the characteristics of truth. In all probability therefore father Thomassin's tables must be turned, and instead of saying, *the whole earth would have been overrun with heresy, had not the emperors maintained the faith*: It might rather be said, *the whole earth would have been overspread with orthodoxy, had not their majesties affected to establish the faith*.

The orthodoxy of the world depends on examination, but establishments destroy examination the mean, and thereby orthodoxy the end. The hope of reward and the fear of punishment influence the bulk of mankind, and when a man risks all by reasoning justly, when the conclusion of his arguments is a fine, an imprisonment, or death, how strong is the temptation not to reason at all, or to reason superficially! Should a test of this man's orthodoxy be required as soon as he arrives at manhood, when his abilities are green, his prospects confined, his passions vigorous, his reason immature, his examples numerous, ten thousand to one but he gives the test: and then the die is cast. He must know little of human nature who does not perceive that all future studies will rather be apologies than examinations, the man will not study to describe but to defend his post. What young gentleman of birth and learning? Who that piques himself on *politesse*, and *savoir vivre*, § having declared upon oath his faith in thirty or forty points, but with Pamphilus would say?

adeon' me ignavum putas?

Adeon' porro ingratum, aut inhumanum, aut ferum?

Ut

§ politeness and good-breeding.

Ut neque me consuetudo, neque amor, neque pudor
Commoveat, neque commoneat, ut SERVEM FIDEM?
Accepi. Acceptam servabo. †

An Emperor embracing the faith is a glorious sight. An emperor, determining his own creed, chusing his chaplains, following his conscience, and honoring the deity as he thinks most agreeable to the word of God, deserves the highest encomiums, merits immortal praise. But should his majesty deny the same privilege to the meanest of his subjects; should he affect to derive a splendor to his piety from injoining an impossibility on his subjects; should an Eusebius flatter, should a Sozomen disguise, should all his contemporaries subscribe to his creed, and make oath that he was right, impartial posterity would think he was wrong. Impartial posterity would say, as was said of a Roman emperor, *had he never reigned, every body would have thought him worthy of reigning!*

If these reflections have any weight in the case of vague general orthodoxy, that is, in the belief of any truth, they have infinitely more in the belief of gospel-truth: The truths delivered to men in the bible are above all others subject to such a train of reasoning.

One, who well understood, declared that in *S. Paul's epistles* there were *SOME things hard to be understood*, which however he thought no blemish to his writings, but, on the contrary, a proof of his exalted wisdom, they are *written*, says he, *according to the WISDOM given unto him*. Agreeable to this, *S. Paul* considered himself as *a debtor both to the wise greeks, and to the unwise barbarians*. He was intrusted with the dispensation of a gospel, whose truths were some of them so plain that an unlettered barbarian might understand

† Do you think me such a stupid, ungrateful, ill-bred brute, that neither custom, nor love, nor shame, can induce me to *fulfil my promise*? I have given my word, and I'll stand to't.

understand them, and which also revealed other truths sublime enough to fill the capacities of the wisest of mankind. Glorious analogy of scripture and nature! Both present objects evident to all, but fully comprehensible by none.

Allow this notion of revelation, and scripture-truths must be classed in different degrees of evidence, and importance. Some truths are so plain that they need but be read to be understood, and as soon as understood are believed. Others are so sublime that through their grandeur, or their distance, they are indeterminable to the greatest natural and acquired abilities, yea an inspired apostle himself cried, *O the depth!*

Now which of these truths would you establish the *orthodoxy*, or right belief of? The first? The plain, simple, easy truths of religion? What! Would you call a council of three or four hundred bishops, would you also place an emperor with all his attendants in canonical form? For what? To make all men swear that water is liquid, that gold is malleable, that a collier is black, and a drunkard mad! Will you take the second class, the indeterminable sublimities of the faith? Truly friend, if the first be needless, the last is dangerous. The church is the land of conscience, and conscience will complain, as a judge would, if you made him pass sentence on what he knew nothing, or next to nothing, about. Go lay hold of yon sly tattertailed astronomer, who neither attends the levees of the great, nor places of public show and diversion; who seldom reads the gazette, nor scarcely knows the right end of a pack of cards; go take from him that mischievous instrument the telescope, or still better, let him look but swear him to his discoveries: Let him make oath that the inhabitants of Saturn are eighteen feet, two inches, and three quarters high. That the ladies are
pregnant

pregnant with one child for thirty years, four months, six days, two hours and nine minutes. Alas! The good man had some such conjectures in his head, and began to calculate, and thought the creator's glory expanding to his view, but, as none of his speculations were practicable in this world, the honest man would have disturbed nobody, it is pity any body should disturb him. Most excellent Constantine! When your imperial majesty summoned 318 bishops to the council of Nice, when you condescended to grace that council with your august presence, it was from the noblest principle in the world, a desire of establishing peace in the church: But was not your majesty imposed upon by the absurdity of your bishops, when you excommunicated and persecuted all that would not sign a creed, some articles of which were as plain as that water is liquid, and others as indeterminable as any thing that passes in the planetary worlds?

If the plainness of some truths renders subscription unnecessary, if the sublimity of others renders it dangerous, is there not another class to be established by law for peace-sake? To be sure there are endless classes of truths and truths, and errors and errors, and you may establish according to your fancy. You may, with the Nicene council, after the creed is safe, proceed to disciplin, and enact, that whereas it is the custom of some churches to pray kneeling on Sundays, hereafter it shall be lawful to pray standing only on that day. And whereas, some of the good old women who served as deaconesses had usually been reckoned clergywomen, hereafter they should be esteemed as of the laity. You may decree, with one council, to depose every clergyman convicted of acting contrary to the interest of the church: Or, with another, that the laity should express their respect for the clergy whenever they
met

met them, by bowing if they met them afoot, by alighting if they met them on horseback: Or with a third, that no deacon should be so rude as to sit down in the presence of a priest. All this you may, what may you not injoin? but whether these are *the things that make for peace*, the next letter shall enquire. Till then Farewell.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

ON

PERSECUTION.

*Si magnus vir cecidit, magnus jacuit: Non magis illum
putes contemni, quam cum ædium sacrarum ruinæ cal-
centur: Quas religiosi æque ac stantes adorant.*

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L E T T E R VII.

ON P E R S E C U T I O N.

S I R,

P I E T Y and plunder, religion and murder, the service of God and the slaughter of his image, are so diametrically opposite, that had you been an inhabitant of the moon, and only heard of an attempt to unite such opposites, you would have been more than a sceptic, a very infidel. But you are an inhabitant of another orb, and you will believe, without being threatned with a penalty, that such an attempt has been made, applauded, rewarded, and, O shame to humanity! the author of a crusade canonized for a Saint! As if the highest seats in paradise were purchasable only with human blood.

Astonishment increases on looking into that religion whence such sanguinary proceedings pretend to flow. Its origin is the *love* of God; its end is *peace and goodwill amongst men*; its laws, its gifts, its motives, its all is love; its author *the prince of peace*, and all its spirit, like its author, *PEACE, PEACE, to him that is nigh, and to him that is far off*. And yet this very religion has been so explained as to patronize the bloodiest cruelties that the world ever saw. Well might S. John, when he saw such a tyranny arise under the christian name, cry, *I wondered with great admiration!*

Whatever idolatry and superstition may have produced, they seem to have been out-finned here; even idolaters seem to have had less intolerance than some christian states. In Egypt a Joseph; in Persia a Nehemiah, a Mordecai; in Babylon a Daniel hold the chief offices at court, without a test, it is credible:

but false christianity forbids men *to buy or sell*, unless they have *the mark* of a slave *in the forehead or in the hand*.

Let not these evils be charged too hastily on any one set of christians, all have stained, though some have dyed their hands with blood. Nor least of all let christianity itself be blamed, any more than the religion of nature for the mal-practices of pagans: corruption has mixed with and debased both, and you will admit *corruptio optimi pessima*. *

When Constantine came to the imperial crown, he found the christian world at war with each other; himself professed christianity, and though it be very doubtful whether he was a christian at all, to his praise it must be said, he was ashamed of their quarrels, and proposed to establish universal peace. At first his majesty granted liberty of conscience, and had he stopped there, the remedy would have operated slowly but surely. But whether it was politically, to answer any state-ends; or whether ignorantly, hoping to produce peace; or whether complaisantly, to please his court-chaplains; or whatever was the cause, in the second year of his reign he called a council of about three hundred bishops to draw up a creed, to constitute canons for discipline, to require subscription, to punish with excommunication, in a word, to establish uniformity in religion by law. This unhappy procedure inflamed the established party with zeal, the excommunicated with revenge, it agitated the passions of mankind, and perpetuated war to this day.

Had his majesty studied nature to have known the fitness of such a law; or scripture to have found an authority from Christ; or his own honor, how he should enforce it; had he examined the matters in dispute, in which the best of his subjects might innocently

* The corruption of the best things is the worst kind of corruption.

innocently err; had he meditated and mastered the subject in any point of view, he might have easily foreseen the consequences: but alas! his majesty did not understand his own religion; and while he meant, innocently perhaps, to serve it, fabricated an instrument to stab it under its fifth rib.

Calling of councils, framing of canons to catch and to kill, shedding of blood under the name and sanction of religion hereafter were the common tricks of succeeding emperors; a complaint is brought against one that he spat on the altar, a process is carried on against the ashes of another, (Origen) for holding that glorified bodies were round, yea, if a man died in the faith, and it appeared in his will that he had left any thing to an heretic, he should be excommunicated. Take care you that are in the church upon earth, for your governors can excommunicate even the blessed in heaven. They were excellent precautions to banish or murder the ejected heretic, to burn his books, and to cut off the hands of such copyists as dared to transcribe his works; if they had not used these precautions they might possibly have been answered, but arguments of this kind are unanswerable. This made old Latimer quaintly complain, *if we say VÆ VOBIS, we are called* CORAM NOBIS. §

It would be very easy to show that violence in religious disputes naturally generates persecution, nor would it be a difficult, though a very unpleasing work to prove, that plots, assassinations, massacres, cruelties of every name, have constantly been produced by denying a liberty of conscience; and more, that such dismal scenes will always follow the same practice, in the same proportion as liberty of conscience is refused. No pretence of prophesying is assumed, but let the cause be tried at the tribunals of reason, history, scripture, and experience.

Whether

§ If we say *Wo be to you* Scribes and Pharisees, we are directly prosecuted for Heresy.

Whether all men have understanding and conscience or no is not necessary now to enquire, it is certain all men pretend to one, most men to both, and a great many to both in a high degree. It is not said that all men formally claim the right of private judgment, nor that many men use it to good purpose, but certainly all men act as if they thought they had that right. Even those that have written most for persecution for conscience-sake, pretend to write, not from interest, ignorance, or byas of any kind, but, O strange! from conviction: thus granting their opponents all they claim. Indeed, let men think and act as they will, the possession of intelligence, and the free use of that intelligence, are what all men naturally claim, not aware perhaps that the same arguments which justify that claim for themselves do it also for others. A man of your sense will allow, that the most vulgar sayings of the common people as fully express their sentiments, and therefore ought to be allowed the same weight in settling the common sense of mankind on any subject, as the politer dialect of the well-bred man. A groom condemns the principles and conduct of a peer. Hold your tongue, cries the house-steward, you saucy dog, my Lord will send you about your business if he knows what you say: *Well, well,* replies the jockey, *you can't hang me for thinking.* Go down to Billingsgate, bid Bess open you some oysters, and, when she begins to swear, reprove her, ask her whether she can't take sixpence without cursing and swearing? *What's that to you?* says she, *pay for your oysters, and take yourself off, every tub must stand upon its own bottom.* See now, these are the claims of mankind. Impose silence on one, and he tells you plainly that you can do nothing more, he has another right beside that of speech, and that he will exercise in spite of your teeth. Require the other to act as you do, and she tells you no, I am accountable for
my

my conduct, not you. You will pardon this, and as a judge, trying a cause in which both the above were concerned, would hear both in their own language, so will you gather the common notion of the right in question from the untaught evidences now introduced.

Perhaps you will say, this is depraved reason. Well Sir. Will you go to the tribunal of refined reason? Shall Locke be judge? Shall my lord Mansfield? whose fine speech you sent with Dr. Furneaux's excellent book. Comparisons may be odious, but to what fine reasoner will you go, and not get a spirit of persecution condemned to go to the place from whence it came, from thence to the place of execution, and there to be hanged till it is dead, dead, dead? The Lord in mercy annihilate the name and the thing!

You will add, some great men have pleaded for it. Ah! This is too true:

And as they are dispos'd can prove it,
Below the moon, or else above it.

If learned men in the church of Rome argue for christianity against heathens and Jews, then the right of private judgment, the detestable character of a persecutor, the merit of those that suffer for conscience-sake, are the topics; yea the catholic church of Rome has attributed a glory to exercises of these kinds which protestants never have. In their public masses they celebrate the merit of those martyrs that suffered for resisting the roman heathen emperors, and plead that very merit, *the merit of resistance*, for the forgiveness of their own sins. A whole choir of Monks will chant on the festivals of S. Laurence, and S. Vincent, and Saint nobody knows whom, the following elegant composition,

Ante

P E R S E C U T I O N.

Ante REGEM accersitur,
Et de REBUS convenitur
occultis ecclesiæ.

Sed NON CEDIT blandimentis:
Emollitur aut tormentis
ejus avariciæ.

ILLUDITUR Decianus
Dum sustinet martyr sanus
pænarum angustias.

Dat minister caritatis
Hostibus exuperatis
gratiarum copias.

Furit igitur PREFECTUS
Et paratur ardens lectus:
Insultantis viscera crates urit aspera

Sudat martyr in agone
SPE MERCEDIS ET CORONÆ
Quæ datur fidelibus PRO CHRISTO certantibus.†
These

† To preserve in a translation the sense and air, or rather, the nonsense and *rimaille*, or *doggrel* of these monkish rhymes is not a little difficult. The following humble imitation may serve instead of a better to convey their meaning.

Before the king S. Laurence stands,
To answer all his high demands
about the church's *secrets*.
But flatt'ry *could not* make him show,
Nor punishment *prevail* to know
who kept the church's pockets.
The martyr safe and sound sustains
The most excruciating pains:
And thus *besools* the emp'ror.
This deacon who supply'd the poor
Gave his tormentors thanks moreo'er,
And came off more than conq'ror.
The Governor then with rage ran mad,
And clap'd him on a gridiron bed,
To roast him for his errors.
The martyr in an agony groans,
In hopes of those rewards and crowns
promis'd to faithful soldiers.

These are the saints, these the meritorious works on which the catholic votaries trust. But now turn the tables, let protestants take the liberty of doing what Saint Laurence did, and lo! all the cathedral shifts about like the weathercock on the top: Self-interest is the pivot on which all turns. Old songs are suspended or forgotten, new ones composed, and all the burly monks swell their cheeks to the tune of

Sublimi in cathedra
Apostolorum sede,
Fulgida lampada
Tribus et linguas judicantia.†

Even protestants take the same method. And (without diving now into these mysteries of sophistry,) it may be truly said that all mankind plead rationally for an exemption from persecution themselves, and that the same reasons conclude with equal strength for other people.

As to the holy scriptures, the man who pretends to derive persecution from them offers such an in-

M fult

S. Laurence (if tales be true) was deacon of the church at Rome in the reign of Decius, under the prefecture of Cornelius Secularis, and was put to death for refusing to give the emperor an account of the money intrusted with him by the church for the use of the poor. If every thing else was credible in this story; the first magistrate in Rome roasting a man on a gridiron (a kind of punishment unknown to the Romans) passes all belief. Blessed be God, Subscription to this, either as an article of *truth*, or as an article of *peace*, is not required now in England. Time was when it would have been he-re-ly to have doubted it though. The reason of some, and the rhyme of others, have long ago banished these absurdities. To expose these legendary lies all hands were aloft at the reformation: Nor was even the gravity of the venerable John Fox the martyrologist ashamed to expose the dreams of the Monks thus,

St. Dunstan's harp hard by a wall,
Fast on a pin did hang-a:
Without man's help, with lies and all,
And of itself did twang-a.

Even the great Mr. Addison proposed to help forward the extirpation of popery, by putting upon the country-girls fans a concourse of people paying their respects to a rusty tenpenny nail.

† The meaning is, that *those illustrious persons, who succeed the apostles in the government of the church, have the power of judging all nations, languages and people.*

sult on the nature of religion in general, on the doctrines and examples of Christ and his apostles in particular, on the common sense of the reader, and on the inspiration of the writers, that he deserves no reply. Indeed, could it be proved that *compel them to come in* means any compulsion but that of evidence, it would be no hard matter to disprove the divinity, and destroy the authority of all the christian religion. It must be owned that many called Deists are men of great learning and sense, but really nothing makes it so doubtful as the paltry way in which they attack the gospel. What signifies nibbling off the edges of a text with your criticisms Gentlemen? Take one, and the same truth is in a hundred more. What avails cavilling at the jagged edges of one poor period, which ought, you say, to be smooth and round? What good can you do by rumbling with rules of syntax? You may talk for ever about elucidation, and interpolation, and canons of interpretation. Alas! The people are prejudiced in favor of this religion, they think it a good one, and they are not frightened by all your learned labor. True, they no more examin this religion than they do your lucubrations; but however, now and then on a Sunday, when their cousins visit them, they hear their children read a scripture-lesson: *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's-sake hath forgiven you.* They don't practise this themselves indeed, but they wish the squire, and the parson, and the overseers would mind S. Paul. They are sure times would be better if they did. Would you then lay *the ax* Gentlemen *to the root of the tree*? Take a new method, prove that this religion teaches men to kill one another for conscience sake. Come, distil the Redeemer's doctrine, extract

from his sermons faction, and passion, and rigor, and murder; expunge benevolence from his book, and persuasion from his lips; make Paul an inquisitor, and his master a pope, and then you'll catch infidels by shoals. You won't angle, patiently angle as you do now, for now and then one disappointed scholar, your arguments will be popular, and will easily intangle all that have not eradicated the tender feelings of humanity. But if this can't be done, if every boy that can read can discover that christianity establisheth liberty and love, *one will chase a thousand of you, and two put ten thousand to flight.* Persecuting Christians carefs religion as Dalilah Samson without knowing where its great strength lays.

If reason and scripture are against you, what says history? You may abridge the matter, and having surveyed the rise, the reign, and the ruin of persecution, you may briefly conclude that it is the greatest absurdity, the most egregious folly, the most preposterous crime that man ever inserted in his list of extravagancies. Did it ever answer the persecutor's end? Has it diminished the number of disputable points? Does it embellish the writings of its amanuenses? Are there not many errors that owe their being now wholly to their sanguinary prohibitions? If there be a piece of salutary advice deducible from history it is *Let them alone*, for if the device be human *it will come to nought.* Yes, heresy may address you in the language of Job, *Are not my days few? Cease then and let me alone, I shall be carried from the womb to the grave, I shall go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death.*

It may seem ungenerous to urge experience at this time of day, when nobody is hurt for conscience-sake. But let not so unkind an imputation be cast on hearts filled with unspotted loyalty, and profoundly devoted to the spirit of the present government.

vernment. The truth is, the laws do not comport with the spirit of the legislators, and all that the late petitioners plead for, is to have the former harmonize with the latter.

An extensive acquaintance with the men authorizes the assertion, they are most conscientiously and intirely attached to the government. They are enthusiasts in praising his late majesty for declaring in Dr. Doddridge's case that he would not suffer the shadow of persecution in his reign. They applaud in the highest strains the lenity of his present majesty, and all they want is the total extinction of those penal laws which the government never use, and declare they never will. Is he an enemy to the house who would exchange some old-fashioned lumber, some rusty swords, and clumsy blunderbuffes, for furniture in the modern taste? Government, like a house, is fabricated for its inhabitants, the *gout* § of the master should reform this, and *L'Esprit* † of the governors regulate that.

Three things are infinitely valuable to all men. Their children, their reputation, and their influence. You are a dissenter Sir, which of these are you not baffled in? You have initiated your son in the principles of religion and morality, you think it time now to give him tuition in a public seminary, you highly value the literati of the two universities, you could intrust them with introducing your son to a future course in the world, but alas! the lad must be deprived of all this, except he submits to the hardship of a *matriculation-oath*, except he deserts a form of worship which he has hitherto been taught to approve, and conforms to a service (in your opinion) too superstitious. Not that College-oaths would hurt him, because Mr. Vicechancellor closes term with a general absolution. Let your own pastor found an academy.

§ Taste.

† The genius, temper, or spirit.

my. But who pray can lawfully endow an unlawful house? Send him abroad. But he is your only son, and you would be nigh to inspect him. What must a man do? Educate him himself; or else prefer conscience to latin and greek, and let him comfort himself with remembering that there were men of sense in the world before the foundation of Athens or Rome.

Is your reputation dear? However, dear as it is, you shall be reputed ignorant, disaffected to government, *a setter forth of strange gods*, nobody shall trouble himself to examin you, yet all shall point at and reproach you; with good reason, you are proscribed by law.

Does a good man wish to extend his influence for moral purposes? A very lawful desire. But he who could fill an office with credit to himself and honor to his country shall be excluded from every office. Why? He wears a long-skirted drab-colored coat, says *thou* instead of *you*, and, to complete his wickedness, cocks up his hat with hooks and eyes instead of loops. These Sir are disqualifications for office.

All these, it is said, are small inconveniencies, these ought not to be called persecution. That is, this is not the worst stage of the disease, this therefore is no disease at all. *The putting forth of the finger* and the *wagging of the head* differ from burning a man, only as the whelp that snaps your fingers differs from the dog that worries you to death. Christian ministers, *renounce these hidden things of dishonesty*: Full of a belief of the goodness of your cause, boldly rest it on its TRUTH; you have nothing to fear, sooner or later truth and benevolence must reign triumphant. Take Calderwood for your example. When James I. had read his book called *Alter Damascenum* he was very uneasy: Let not this disturb

disturb your majesty, said one of the bishops, we will answer the book. *Tush mon*, said the monarch, *what wid ye aunswer, 'tis nothing but scraptur and rason.*

Farewell.

LETTER

L E T T E R VIII.

O N

S O P H I S T R Y.

Declamatores verò in primis sunt admonendi, ne contradictiones eas ponant, quibus facillime responderi possit: neu sibi stultum adversarium fingant.

QUINTILIAN.

LETTER VIII.

ON SOPHISTRY,

S I R,

IT is a just remark of the wise man, that he who applies *his heart to know, to search, and to seek out wisdom*, when he has counted mankind *one by one*, will scarcely meet with *one among a thousand* among men, and fewer still among women, who attend to THE REASON OF THINGS, that is, who are capable of avoiding sophistry, and of admitting a close argumentation. Sometimes force, and sometimes fun supply the place of reason, and sanctify an argument by proxy. It is not long since a certain person, who could no otherways account for his ill-luck, ascribed his misfortunes to witchcraft, and swam the supposed witch to prove her guilt. An old gentleman who saw this tragi-comedy, though he detested the trial, yet believed the woman's witchcraft. Some of the neighboring clergy endeavored to convince the old gentleman both of the inhumanity of the trial, and of the absurdity of the notion. Pray, said he, gentlemen, do you believe that there were witches in the time of Moses? Undoubtedly we do. *Very well*, replied the good old man, *as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen.*

Innumerable are the things that usurp the throne of reason, from the ferula in a country school to the finesse of a declaimer in a public assembly. To be sure every one knows best what pleases himself, and where nothing is at stake let men divert themselves with sophistry. But where men's dearest interests are in hand sophistry must be banished, and a close just reasoning pursued. How seldom is this the case!

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Some mistake the question: as a late anonymous writer among the people called Baptists. The author addresses some of his brethren on the article of mixt communion, and endeavors to dissuade them from admitting to the Lord's supper any that had not been baptized by immersion: and thus to establish what he calls a strict communion. In order to prove the necessity of this, the writer undertakes to prove that baptism was administered by immersion to all the members of the primitive churches. He examines the nature, the subject, the mode, and the end of baptism; and by a too common inadvertence finishes the book without coming to the question. The question was not whether baptism was originally administered to adults on a profession of faith by immersion: In this it seems both agreed; but whether any indulgence ought to be granted to erring consciences? and if any, how much? But these were articles the good man never thought of.

Some suppose in arguing what their opponents do not grant. Gregory the great was guilty of this sophism, when he enjoined the bishop of Cagliari to force Heretics and Jews to be baptized into the catholic faith: *for, says his holiness, if these converts be hypocrites, yet much will be gained by it, because at least, their children will become good catholics.* Really your holiness's infallibility has for once plaid you a slippery trick. Jews and Heretics will not grant, and his Lordship of Cagliari must doubt whether, hypocrisy in a parent will generate sincerity in a son.

It is not worth while to class the various sophisms which have (inadvertently let it be hoped) dropped from the pens of some who have pleaded for intolerance against the petitioners. The profoundest respect is due to every man who contributes to the elucidation of a question of this kind, and though

a freedom may be taken with the little excrescences and luxuriances of such writers, yet no disrespect is intended to their persons, nor any contempt cast on their doctrines, ministry, learning or benevolence.—The qualities of their arguments, not of the men that use them, are in dispute.

“Petitioning, say some, originated in principle. Some of the petitioners are Arians. To them indeed a freedom from subscription may be desirable; but what have we to do with it, who subscribe nothing but what we believe? Beside, joining such men in such a request, would be doing all in our power to give them an opportunity of spreading false doctrine. It would be going back to popery by renouncing the doctrines of the reformation. It would reflect dishonor on his majesty, and offend the clergy.”—Loyalty to the king: respect to the clergy: faith in the 39 articles: the piety of the reformers: the patronage of arianism: What a bundle of sophisms are here! 1. Who can prove that petitioning originated in principle? The contrary indeed might be proved. It would be easy to show that an intire liberty of search is an idea prior to all that is meant by principle here. 2. Suppose it did originate in an Arian, what then? unless it was a part of his arianism what signifies its originating in the man? Now this is no part of arianism. Arianism belongs to speculation and DOCTRIN, this to practice and DISCIPLIN. Suppose a man should say, Sir, I beg you would not meddle with music, optics, surveying, or gauging, all these are the inventions of geometers, and geometry originated in Egypt, and if you don’t take care they’ll make a mummy of you, and send you somewhere to be shown when you are dead.—That is, you would reply, the Egyptians, who first dealt in geometry, practised embalming also; cannot I receive one of their inventions without embracing both?

both? 3. It is very questionable whether you do believe all you have subscribed upon oath. You make oath to the *truth* of so many articles, now their *truth* to you depends on their containing neither less nor more than you believe of the objects in question: but if the articles do really express your sentiments so exactly, how is it, when your ministers are received to ordination, that they read, and frequently print other creeds extremely different from what they have subscribed? Allow you do believe all the articles, what is all that to the purpose? The petitioners don't enquire *what* you believe, but *why* you believe; not faith, but the power that produces it is the question. You do believe the established doctrines; the petitioners ask whether you believe them because they are established, and you answer, you do believe the doctrines. This is ingenious, but is it logical? 4. You say the Arians need exemption from penal statutes, but you don't. Still this is questionable. Most certainly the doctrine preached in most places of worship does need toleration, and by the law is actually exposed to rigor. Pray does your church read *Bel and the Dragon* for example of life and instruction of manners? Ah! if Harry the Eighth should come again and want money, he would catch you all in a *præmunire*, all to a man, without excepting one. Let it be granted that you are safe, is selfishness a part of your religion? and is it generous to forget your brethren now you are at court, as Pharaoh's butler forgot his friend Joseph? And after all, do you not know in your own consciences that liberty to be an Arian, and liberty to be a Calvinist, are cyons that grow out of the same stock? That is, they both proceed from a liberty of private judgment, which private judgment subjected to the magistrate deprives Calvin and Arminius, Arius and Socinus alike. At this rate,
you

you have a right to be a calvinist only as long as the magistrate pleases; and, should the magistrate think proper to reform the church again, should he discard the 39 articles, and establish the Racovian catechism, how can you consistently with your own declarations complain? 5. Joining the petitioners, you add, is helping to spread false doctrine. No surely! Is arianism so self-evident that to propose is to propagate it? Is the divinity of Christ so badly supported by evidence that it must call in the sword? A fair opponent is not against granting his adversary every reasonable advantage, his conquest is the more glorious. Let the Arians come forth boldly, let them propose all their objections, if the divinity of Christ be true, it will gloriously answer all: if not true, what interest have you in it? Spread false doctrine! As if the Arians had reserved *in petto* some things not yet said! Why the subject has been exhausted, what can be added? E'en say of all sorts of Heretics, as one on another occasion, *they have said; they do say; they will say; and let them say.*

Nothing need be said to prove that *truth* has nothing to fear from examination in every point of light. If all parties would agree to a general search, perhaps all parties might lose something, but they would gain more than they lost, the *truth* would come out. A mind properly disposed to truth would not only not forbid any examination, but like some famous painters and printers, would reward such as could discover defects. But here lays the core of the misery, *bold fast without wavering* is the alpha and omega of every man's creed, be his creed composed when, where, by whom, or of what it will. It is not worth while therefore to pursue these sophisms any farther. All that would say any thing to purpose, should show a just reason why a liberty claimed by one man, and allowed to him, should be denied to another man.

Let

Let it not appear strange, if it be affirmed, that there is not a man in England, if he professeth to be of any religious party, but **must** of necessity be guilty of sophistry, if he denies the right of private judgment to the petitioners. All religions in the world consist of principles and practices, and the last are founded on the first. There is a God, is a principle of natural religion. That God is to be worshipped, is a practice arising from, and supported by that principle. Now is it not plain to a demonstration, that if a man of any religion in the world was to offer these two propositions to be received by another, he would profess to have examined them himself, appeal to the reason of the other, and offer to give evidence? That this is the only just and natural *ratio* of mankind is clear, and it is equally clear, that when they depart from this they plunge into sophistry.

Consider four facts. 1. All men claim reason for their own sentiments; their *own* reason; not a magistrate's, nor a priest's, nor any body's else. If any man can make good this claim for himself, is it not sophistry to deny it to another? 2. No man ever tried by the power of magistracy, to make a believer of an infant, an idiot, or a madman. Why not? They have carcases and you have creeds! Yes, but reason is absent. Well, but where's the difference between an idiot in whom reason is absent, and a man of sense in whom reason is present, if the right of private judgment be denied to both? All the difference is, one CANNOT reason, the other MUST NOT. As well then make a believer without it. Lay by the sword to both, else you play the sophister. 3. The most bloody persecutors have pretended to reason Heretics into truth, and have affected only to draw the sword when reason could not prevail. Hence the English reformers were first
disputed

disputed at Oxford in public, and afterward burnt. Hence all the parade of priests, and friars, and bishops to confute and convert the martyrs in their cells, before they were brought out to execution. If religion be not received by examining, judging, and self-determining, why dispute? and if it be, why burn and destroy? Is not this cruelty and sophistry both? 4. It sometimes happens that the chief magistrate, the king, who should preserve the creed of his subjects, does not believe it himself. In such a case, who but a madman would dare to insult royalty with the thought of any corporal punishment? Whether a *tyrant* who tramples on the people's privileges may be resisted, is one question: but whether an *Heretic*, who deprives no subject of a right, only does not believe as his subjects believe, may be resisted, is another. Now if *mere Heresy* ought not to dethrone a king, how, without the help of sophism, can it be proved, that it ought to disfranchise a subject? An hereditary right to seven acres is as inalienable as an hereditary right to seven provinces, or to seven kingdoms; and in many respects more so: Seeing the latter was originally granted to a reigning family for services to be rendered to the state; and the former descended from father to son free from such obligations. When that detestable monster James Clement assassinated Henry III. of France; when Ravillac, that execrable regicide murdered Henry IV. when several pretended to justify those wretched criminals by urging the *heresy* of these unfortunate princes; did not all Europe shudder at the thought?

To trace all these facts would be too tedious, let the first only be recalled, and for five minutes re-examined: All men claim the right of private judging, and are sophistical in denying it to their fellow creatures.

Paganism

Paganism presents to view none greater than Socrates. He studied and taught philosophy in both its branches, natural and moral. The first is expressed in Plato's ΖΗΤΩΝ ΤΑ ΤΕ ΥΠΟ ΓΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΕΠΟΥΡΑΝΙΑ; and the last in Xenophon's ΣΚΟΠΩΝ ΤΙ ΕΥΣΕΒΕΣ, ΤΙ ΑΣΕΒΕΣ, ΤΙ ΔΙΚΑΙΟΝ, ΤΙ ΑΔΙΚΟΝ, &c. In settling his own notions he paid no regard to magistracy but to his Dæmon, which, in all probability was that philosopher's term for right reason. In communicating it to others, he paid no regard to the sophists of the age, nor much, if any, to his own persuasion; all his aim was to set a young gentleman a thinking for himself, and to give a right turn to a habit of reasoning;

to rear the tender thought,

To teach the young idea how to shoot.

In all this he followed NATURE, and so he did when he praised Homer for calling Agamemnon THE SHEPHERD of his people ποιμένα λαών. For he summed up all the regal virtues in one, that was, the rendering their subjects happy. Cicero's good sense was so delighted with his method of establishing truth, that he says he chose the dialogue-way for this very reason; *here, says he, every doubt may be proposed, and answered.* This, adds he, is *vetus et Socratica ratio contra alterius opinionem differendi.* * Now all this is incompatible with force, and no pagan can receive these principles and employ force without falling into sophistry. Plato however is guilty of this in his tenth book *de legibus*.

Pass from Paganism to Judaism. The first of that nation is undoubtedly Jesus Christ: To him the Sadducees once proposed a question relative to the doctrine of the resurrection, a doctrine which Jesus believed and taught, but which they denied. Remark how the Saviour dealt with Heretics. He
derives

* This is the ancient method which Socrates used to disprove an opposite opinion.

derives their error from their ignorance of two things, the *scriptures* and *the power of God*. Had they examined the evidences of God's *power*, they would have known he *could*, and had they attended to the meaning of *scripture*, they might have known he *would* raise the dead. If ignorance produceth error, heresy can be removed by knowledge only. Jesus Christ therefore asks *have ye not read?* urges a text, and goes to reasoning about it. It is nothing to say the Jewish church tolerated such people, Jesus Christ himself only reasoned with them. When Saul, that glory of the Jewish nation, proposed to *cast down reasonings, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*, what weapons did he use? *I Paul myself* BESEECH YOU, BY THE MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST. This, you will say, is proof to christians, but not to Jews. Be it so. Hear that famous Rabbi Abarbanel, *on the end of sacrificing*. He says that there are three sorts of sacrifices established in the book of Leviticus, and he assigns to each a different end. The end of the *burnt-offering* was that man might fix his attention on the divine nature, and might perceive the immortality of his own soul; that the action of the fire, separating the parts of the animal, and causing them to ascend, properly represented the ascent of the sacrificer's soul to God after its dissolution; that it was burnt whole on altars dedicated to God, to express the return of the whole soul to God from whom it was derived; that for this reason, their wise men said that burnt-offerings related only to *the thoughts of the mind*; that Rabbi Levi had proved this from Job i. 5. *Job offered burnt-offerings according to the number of his children, for he said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God IN THEIR HEARTS:* Whence we gather, adds he, that

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he who offered a burnt-offering meant to purge away the stains of his mind, A WICKED OPINION, or A WRONG THOUGHT, and to say to himself, *return unto thy rest my soul*. That the burnt-offering referred chiefly to the rational soul, which is the chief part of the man, he farther proves by Lev. i. 3. *he shall offer it of his voluntary will before the Lord*, and, says he, he that offers the sacrifice confesses that all the powers of his body, and all the operations of his mind, ought to be devoted to venerate and worship his creator, that this only he should desire, this only study, to unite himself to God; and, like the victim, to ascend on his altar. The sum is, that the burnt-offering was designed to attract and accustom men to love and study divine things, and to expiate their guilt when they had not done it. If the Jews believe the divine legation of Moses; if they receive the doctrine of burnt-offerings as their Rabbies teach, they throw a lustre over their ceremonial law by harmonizing it with the law of nature, they claim a right of private judging from the magistrate, and with christians reserve conscience only for God: Nor can a Jew allowing all this force conscience without manifest sophistry.

Are not the roman catholics in the same predicament with the rest of mankind on this article? Do not they also reason well till their own turn is served, and then turn sophisters? That famous Jesuit Bourdaloue, in the xvi vol. of his works, *on the faith that conquers the world* speaks thus. “ To support
 “ persecution is one of the most difficult things in
 “ the world. A man groans under his bondage, and
 “ a fund of equity, rectitude, and conscience in his
 “ soul, makes him a hundred times desire to shake
 “ off the yoke, and to free himself from such a tyr-
 “ ranny, but his courage fails, and when he would
 “ execute his design, all his resolutions are fled.

“ Now

" Now what can determin, confirm, and render him
 " superior to every trial? RELIGION. With the
 " arms of the faith, he wards off every blow, he
 " resists all attacks, he is invincible. There is not
 " a friendship but he breaks, nor a society but he
 " flies, nor a threatening but he contemns; neither
 " hopes, nor interest, nor advantage but he sacri-
 " ficeth to God and his duty. Such are the dispo-
 " sitions of a man animated with *the SPIRIT of christ-*
 " *ianity*, and supported by the faith which he pro-
 " fesses. Thus he thinks, and thus he acts. The rea-
 " son is, BEING A CHRISTIAN, HE ACKNOWLEDGETH,
 " properly speaking, NO OTHER MASTER BUT GOD:
 " or, acknowledging other powers, he considers them
 " only as subordinate to the Almighty, rightly ele-
 " vating him above all without exception. . . .
 " How many inferior people and domestics have
 " there been whom NO AUTHORITY could corrupt,
 " nor divert from the path of exact probity? What
 " torments have millions of martyrs endured? No-
 " thing has alarmed them, *ni les arrets des magistrats*, §
 " nor the fury of tyrants, nor the rage of execution-
 " ers, nor the obscurity of prisons, neither racks,
 " nor wheels, nor fire, nor sword. Now whence
 " did these glorious soldiers of Jesus Christ derive
 " this immoveable constancy, but from that RELI-
 " GION which was so deeply imprinted in their
 " hearts?" How! *is Saul also among the prophets!*

It is not father Bourdaloue alone that talks thus,
 topics of this kind make half the panegyrics of all
 the martyrs in the church of Rome. Bossuet and
 Flechier, Massillon the Cicero, and Fenelon the
 Longinus of France, all agree here. Is it not ten
 thousand pities that such men should change sides,
 and deny all they have advanced when protestants
 make the same claim? How easy would it be in such

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§ neither the decrees of magistrates.

a case to intangle the whole roman catholic and apostolic church in a sophism!

Does the established church of England claim authority over men's consciences, or not? If she does not, why require subscription? If she does, why disown the spirit of persecution? Do the several sects of dissenters require this authority, or do they not? They cannot claim it by law, nor do they pretend to derive it from scripture. Why then are they not unanimous in humbly petitioning for an abolition of what themselves call an unjust claim? Do the people called methodists claim this authority? Whatever some clergymen so called may have pleaded for, most certainly their founder did not claim it for himself or for others. The reverend compiler of the late Mr. Whitefield's life relates an attempt of the two Erskines, and the associate presbytery, to make Mr. Whitefield subscribe the solemn league and covenant. Among other proposals they offered to send two of their brethren with him to England, and two more into America to settle presbytery in each. Suppose, said Mr. Whitefield, a number of independents should come, and declare, that after the greatest search, they were convinced that independency was the right church-government, and would disturb nobody if tolerated, should they be tolerated? No, replied these compassionate christians. And here very properly ended a conference, which Mr. Whitefield considered as an insult on the rights of mankind.—When Mr. Ralph Erskine, to engage Mr. Whitefield to preach only for them, urged, *we are the Lord's people. If others,* replied Mr. Whitefield *be the devil's people, they have more need to be preached to. For my part,* added he, *all places are alike to me, and if the Pope himself would lend me his pulpit, I would gladly proclaim in it the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

This

This is the professed, original spirit of genuin methodism, and if the people denominated methodists now, embrace other spirits, they have forgotten their founder's original plan, they have deserted the grand principle of CATHOLICISM taught them by the reverend Messieurs Whitefield, Wesleys, and others of their first ministers, they deprive their cause of its glory, and all their zeal for universal benevolence, professed for forty years, unmask at last, or, to speak more favorably, at last degenerates into zeal for a party. Such gentlemen, as plead for intolerance, of this name, are humbly requested to remember a just and sensible remark of the late Mr. Whitefield's on a sermon preached by a minister of the associate presbytery at the close of the conference above-mentioned. "*The good man so spent himself in the former part of his sermon, in talking against prelacy, the common prayer-book, the surplice, the rose in the hat, and such like externals; that when he came to the latter part of his text, to invite poor sinners to Jesus Christ, his breath was so gone, that he could scarce be heard.* And this will always be the case; that learning, eloquence, strength, and zeal, which should be spent on enforcing *the weightier matters of the law, judgment, faith and mercy*, will be unprofitably wasted on *the titling of mint, anise, and cummin*, on discarding or defending a bow to the east, or a rose in the hat. But let who will trifle thus, the bare idea of such a mission, and such a doctrine, as the people called methodists profess, is totally unintelligible, and intirely indefensible without the prior notion of universal toleration. In what city? In what village? In what church? In what barn, have not the methodists cried EXAMIN YOURSELVES *whether ye be in the faith?*

In short, whoever looks attentively will find that the leading principles of the petitioners, as far as they

they relate to the subject in question, are the allowed or professed principles of all mankind, and it will be easy from hence to infer that universal toleration, when thoroughly understood, will meet with less opposition than may at first seem from all ranks of men; all men, statesmen, merchants, churchmen, and princes above all, will find their account in it.

Happy the man whose mind does not float on the surface of christianity! whose soul, not content with the mere ceremonial, rises into the benign system of the gospel; who, neither benumbed by indolence, inflamed by prejudice, nor frightened by nominal bugbears, nobly dares to think and act for himself; a lover of truth, a friend of benevolence, an imitator of Christ, and of that God *who causeth his sun to rise on the just and unjust, his rain to descend on the evil and the good.*

Whatever be the issue, worthy Sir, of this controversy, you will not refuse joining in that prayer which the established church directs her members to use on S. Simon and S. Jude's day; O ALMIGHTY GOD, WHO HAST BUILT THY CHURCH UPON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE HEAD CORNER-STONE; GRANT US SO TO BE JOINED TOGETHER IN UNITY OF SPIRIT BY THEIR DOCTRIN, THAT WE MAY BE MADE AN HOLY TEMPLE ACCEPTABLE UNTO THEE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. Amen.

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